ECLECTIC ENGLISH CLASSICS

GRAY'S POEMS AND GOLDSMITH'S DESERTED VILLAGE

VAN DYKE

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GRAY'S

ELEGY IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

(WITH OTHER SELECTIONS)

AND

GOLDSMITH'S

THE DESERTED VILLAGE



Gray

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GRAY'S

ELEGY IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

AND OTHER SELECTIONS

EDITED BY

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GRAY
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INTRODUCTION.

THOMAS GRAY was born in Cornhill, London, December 26, 1716. His father, Philip Gray, was a scrivener and broker, a man of violent temper and jealous disposition, with some symptoms of madness. He abandoned his family, and died abroad, leaving but little of his reputed wealth.

His mother was Dorothy Antrobus Gray, most touchingly described by the poet, in the inscription placed on her tombstone, as "the tender mother of many children, one of whom alone had the misfortune to survive her." The other eleven children died in infancy. Mrs. Gray supported her son by keeping, with her sister, a millinery shop in London, and it was altogether through her care and industry that Gray enjoyed the advantages of education. In 1727 he was sent to Eton College, under the auspices of his two uncles, Robert and Thomas Antrobus, the former of whom was assistant to a master of Eton, and a fellow of Peterhouse College, and the latter a fellow of King's College, Cambridge. At Eton he met Horace Walpole, son of the prime minister, with whom he formed a friendship that lasted, with a slight interruption, while they both lived, and that was of immense advantage to the future poet.

In 1734 he went to Cambridge, where for a short time he was a pensioner at Pembroke Hall; but he soon went over as a fellow-commoner to Peterhouse, his uncle Robert's college. In the following year Walpole put in an appearance at King's College.

In September, 1738, Gray left Cambridge without taking a degree, but in 1743 he received from this institution the degree of LL.B. He lived for six months at his father's house, with no settled plans for the future, although he had some thoughts of studying law.

Fortunately for him, in March, 1739, Walpole proposed a tour of the Continent, agreeing generously to pay all expenses and at the same time to allow Gray perfect independence of action. It is interesting to note that Walpole made his will before starting, and had he died abroad, Gray would have been his sole legatee. It was during this tour that Walpole and Gray quarreled, and the latter returned home alone after an absence of two and a half years. Walpole generously took all the blame for the quarrel on his own shoulders, and the friendship was later renewed, and thereafter remained uninterrupted. The sketches of his travels written by Gray evince his good taste and his remarkable learning, even at this early period of his life.

Shortly after Gray's return to England, his father died in embarrassed circumstances, leaving him without the means of pursuing his intended study of the law; and he retired to Cambridge, fixing his residence at the university, where, with the exception of two short intervals, he continued to live during the remainder of his life. He chose Cambridge as his home partly from motives of economy, but mainly because of the ready access it afforded to books,—for he found his happiness in study. He became a profound scholar, versed in many fields of knowledge. Philoso-

phy, botany and zoölogy, language, history, archæology, music, art, were among the studies to which he devoted himself, and in which he acquired no little eminence. The one subject that seemed entirely foreign to his tastes was mathematics. "Must I pore upon mathematics?" he said. "Alas! I cannot see in it too much light. I am no eagle. It is very possible that two and two make four, but I would not give four farthings to demonstrate this ever so clearly."

In 1742 he wrote his "Ode on the Spring" and the "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College," his "Hymn to Adversity" and the "Sonnet on the Death of Richard West;" and it was probably in the same year that he began the "Elegy." He wrote little, partly because of his studious and contemplative disposition, which left him no leisure for writing, partly because he was so critical that he seldom could approve his own work, and partly because of an excessive reserve which avoided publicity of any kind. His extreme modesty is well illustrated in the following extracts from a letter written to Horace Walpole in 1768:

"Dodsley told me in the spring that the plates from Mr. Bentley's designs were worn out, and he wanted to have them copied and reduced to a smaller scale for a new edition. I dissuaded him from so silly an expense, and desired he would put in no ornaments at all. The 'Long Story' was to be totally omitted, as its only use (that of explaining the prints) was gone; but to supply the place of it in bulk, lest *my works* should be mistaken for the works of a flea, I promised to send him an equal weight of poetry or prose; so, since my return hither, I put up about two ounces of stuff, viz., 'The Fatal Sisters,' 'The Descent of Odin' (of both which you have copies), a bit of something from the Welsh, and certain little notes. . . . This is literally all; and with all this,

I shall be but a shrimp of an author. To what you say to me so civilly, that I ought to write more, I reply in your own words (like the pamphleteer, who is going to confute you out of your own mouth), 'What has one to do, when *turned of fifty*, but really to think of finishing?' However, I will be candid (for you seem to be so with me), and avow to you that till fourscore and ten, whenever the humor takes me, I will write, because I like it, and because I like myself better when I do so. If I do not write much, it is because I cannot."

The "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," published in 1751, won him immediate popularity,—which occasioned no little surprise to himself. Four editions were exhausted in one year. Byron said of this poem: "Had Gray written nothing but his 'Elegy,' high as he stands, I am not sure that he would not stand higher. It is the corner stone of his glory. Gray's 'Elegy' pleased instantly and eternally." And the remark of General Wolfe to his officers, the night before his victory at Quebec, has become famous: "Gentlemen, I would rather be the author of that poem than take Quebec."

In 1757 Gray published his Pindaric odes, "The Progress of Poesy" and "The Bard," which were not received with favor. Gray ascribed their unpopularity to the unintelligence of his readers, and treated their opinions with contempt. To some friends who had admired these poems he wrote: "You are doing a very unfashionable thing, for all people of condition are agreed not to admire, nor even to understand. One very great man, writing to an acquaintance of his and mine, says that he has read them seven or eight times; and that now, when next he sees him, he shall not have above thirty questions to ask." These "questions" are answered for the present reader in the footnotes, many

of which were later prepared by Gray himself, under pressure of his friends and publishers, "just to tell the gentle reader that Edward I. was not Oliver Cromwell, nor Queen Elizabeth the witch of Endor."

The death of Gray's mother, in 1753, was an occasion of great grief to him, as he was much attached to her, and repaid her with his love for all her sacrifices in his behalf.

In 1757, on Colley Cibber's death, the poet-laureateship was offered to Gray. He declined the appointment, however, for reasons stated in an admirable letter to the Rev. William Mason, from which the following is an extract:

"Though I very well know the bland, emollient, saponaceous qualities both of sack and silver, yet if any great man would say to me, 'I make you rat-catcher to his Majesty, with a salary of £300 a year, and two butts of the best Malaga; and though it has been usual to catch a mouse or two, for form's sake, in public once a year, yet to you, sir, we shall not stand upon these things,' I cannot say I should jump at it. Nay, if they would drop the very name of the office, and call me Sinecure to the King's Majesty, I should still feel a little awkward, and think everybody I saw smelled a rat about me. But I do not pretend to blame any one else that has not the same sensations. For my part, I would rather be sergeant trumpeter or pinmaker to the palace. Nevertheless, I interest myself a little in the history of it, and rather wish somebody may accept it that will retrieve the credit of the thing, if it be retrievable or ever had any credit. . . . The office itself has always humbled the professor hitherto (even in an age when kings were somebody), if he were a poor writer by making him more conspicuous, and if he were a good one by setting him at war with the little fry of his own pro-

fession; for there are poets little enough to envy even a poet laureate."

The professorship of modern history at Cambridge falling vacant in 1762, Gray applied for the appointment, but was unsuccessful. In 1765 he went on a tour through Scotland, descriptions of which are preserved for us in the form of many interesting letters to his friends. Not long after his return, in 1768, the professorship which Gray had coveted again fell vacant, and the duke of Grafton bestowed it on the poet. The honor came too late, however, to give him pleasure. Ill health rendered the duties of his office burdensome to him. He never delivered any lectures, and thought seriously of resigning.

In 1771 he was attacked by gout of the stomach, and died on the 30th of July, at the age of 55. He was buried by the side of his mother, at Stoke Pogis, the supposed scene of his "Elegy."

Gray never married, and his life was singularly devoid of variety. His manners were, to some, "disagreeably effeminate and fastidious; but he was a man of the most exact taste, the purest morals, and the most independent spirit." Taine calls him "the morose hermit," others, more appropriately, "the gentle recluse." His devotion to study emphasized a naturally serious disposition, though there are not wanting gleams of sunny humor, seen mostly in his letters.

Gray has given us several sketches of his own character, both in prose and in verse. In two letters written to his friend, Richard West, he says:

"As I am recommending myself to your love, methinks I ought to send you my picture (for I am no more what I was, some circumstances excepted, which I hope I need not particularize to you). You must add, then, to your former idea, two

years of age, a reasonable quantity of dullness, a great deal of silence, and something that rather resembles than is thinking; a confused notion of many strange and fine things that have swum before my eyes for some time, a want of love for general society —indeed, an inability to it. On the good side you may add a sensibility for what others feel, and indulgence for their faults and weaknesses, a love of truth, and detestation of everything else. Then you are to deduct a little impertinence, a little laughter, a great deal of pride, and some spirits. . . .

"Low spirits are my true and faithful companions; they get up with me, go to bed with me, make journeys and returns as I do, nay, and pay visits, and will even affect to be jocose and force a feeble laugh with me; but most commonly we sit alone together, and are the prettiest insipid company in the world."

On a sheet of paper found in his pocketbook, and dated 1761, appeared the following lines:

"Too poor for a bribe, and too proud to importune,
He had not the method of making a fortune;
Could love, and could hate, so was thought somewhat odd;
No very great wit, he believed in a God;
A post or a pension he did not desire,
But left church and state to Charles Townshend and Squire."

A résumé of the influences that affected Gray's poetry will help us to understand much in his work that might otherwise perplex us. Those who write of the history of English literature usually divide it into three great periods—the Elizabethan, the classic, and the Victorian age. This, of course, does not take into account the time of Chaucer and his contemporaries, sometimes called the pre-English era.

In the transition from one period to the succeeding one there seems to be an interregnum, in which the representative writers reflect to some extent the characteristics of their immediate predecessors in the kingdom of letters, and at the same time foreshadow the manner and style of the succeeding age.

John Milton (1608–1674), who was a boy when Shakespeare died, and John Dryden (1631–1700) illustrated this idea. The former says that he took Spenser as his original, but he was perhaps to a large extent indebted to the influence of all the brighter stars in the splendid galaxy of the English Renaissance. "He took their mythology, their allegories, sometimes their conceits, and discovered anew their rich coloring, their magnificent sentiment of living nature, their inexhaustible admiration of forms and colors. But at the same time he transformed their diction and employed poetry in a new service."[1] His view of nature was therefore largely through the eyes of others. His style, brilliant and composite, was less natural than that of his masters, but more formal, more regular, more concentrated, and is a first step to the purely formal and exact style of the artificial or so-called classic age of Pope and his contemporaries.

Though Dryden is regarded as the founder of the classical school of poetry, he is also, but perhaps not so broadly, reflective of the past age. He "both borrows and mars the inventions of Shakespeare." With Shakespeare words were quickening things, and behind a single word was often a whole scene of imagery, a mass of feeling, sentiment, passion. With Dryden, though there may be in them a little flickering of reflected beams, they create no vivid likeness of natural objects, and only feebly stir an enfeebled passion. They are arranged for form's sake, as if poetry

[1] Taine's English Literature.

were a matter of systematized learning, and a thing resulting from intellectual effort only.

The effort for exactness of formal expression in verse, begun by Dryden, the father of this school of poetry, was perfected by Pope, his devoted disciple, in whom the classical spirit centered, and he became the "prince of the artificial school of poetry." During his time the classical style became dominant, and its ascendency remains more or less potent to the present time. It is an admirable style; but it is *art*, not *nature;* its pompous declamation is neither impassioned nor impassioning; its classical correctness is not a delicate or simple beauty; it is in no sense "simple, sensuous, passionate."

Although the classical spirit was altogether, and still is somewhat, persistent and dominant, there came again the recurrent transition and a return to nature. Toward the end of the eighteenth century we begin to notice the departure of artificial scene-painting, poetic machinery, the management of words for mere literary effect; poetry begins again to put on the robe of nature, but *with* art; nature appears again as the sun and the clouds and the winds and the rains make it, and not as the poetic artificer fancies it; and passion, feelings, sentiments, are once more as human and intense as human nature makes them. The tinsel of classical embroidery is becoming dull and tarnished.

This period gives us Thomson, a sad, impassioned man who talks with objects, and for whom the sky, the fields, the sun, the rain, and the mists have the genuine smile or frown of nature; Akenside, a profoundly thoughtful man, imbued with the lofty spirit of old Greek poetry; Collins, whose enthusiasm, ending in madness, bursts forth in an "Ode to the Passions;" Goldsmith, the amiable and affectionate poet, whose "Vicar of Wakefield"

is "the most charming of Protestant pastorals," who in his "Deserted Village" and "Traveler," as well as in some of his prose works, discourses wisely on men, manners, and the characteristics of neighboring European civilizations; and Gray, "the morose hermit of Cambridge," who in his earlier odes is influenced by Dryden and in his later poems by Spenser and Milton.

Gray was the greatest English lyric poet of his time and of all ages. "Extreme conciseness of expression, yet pure, perspicuous, and musical, is one of the grand beauties of lyric poetry. This I have always aimed at, and never could attain," he writes, with his excessive modesty, yet "his art was a perfect lyric art." His diction is characterized by its perfect finish, its felicity of expression, its wealth of apt and splendid imagery, and a harmony of numbers surpassed by few, if any. His taste is both exact and pure, and his judgment always sound.

As might be expected, Gray's letters are more characteristic of his personality than are his poems. Two brief quotations regarding them will close this introduction. The first is from William Cowper, who says: "I once thought Swift's letters the best that could be written, but I like Gray's better. His humor or his wit, or whatever it is to be called, is never ill-natured or offensive, and yet, I think, equally poignant with the dean's." And William Hazlitt, in his "Lectures on the English Poets," says: "His letters are inimitably fine. If his poems are sometimes finical and pedantic, his prose is quite free from affectation. He pours his thoughts out upon paper as they arise in his mind; and they arise in his mind without pretense or constraint, from the pure impulse of learned leisure and contemplative indolence. . . . He had nothing to do but to read and think, and to tell his friends what he read and thought. His life was a luxurious, thoughtful dream."

CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF GRAY'S LIFE.

YEAR	EVENT	GRAY'S AGE
1716,	December 26. Gray was born at Cornhill, London.	
1727.	Entered Eton College; met Horace Walpole . . .	11
1734.	Entered Peterhouse, Cambridge	18
1738.	Left Cambridge	22
1739.	Tour on the Continent with Walpole	23
1741.	Returned to England; death of his father	25
1742.	Wrote "Ode on the Spring," "Ode on Eton College," "Hymn to Adversity," "Sonnet on West;" began "Elegy;" removed to Peterhouse, Cambridge	26
1743.	Took degree of LL.B. at Cambridge	27
1747.	Wrote "Ode on Death of a Favorite Cat;" his first publication—"Ode on Eton College"	31
1748.	Wrote "Alliance of Education and Government" .	32
1750.	Wrote "A Long Story"	34
1751.	Published the "Elegy"	35
1753.	Death of his mother	37
1754.	Wrote "Ode to Vicissitude"	38
1755.	Wrote "Progress of Poesy;" began "The Bard" .	39
1757.	Published "Progress of Poesy" and "The Bard" .	41
1762.	Declined appointment to poet-laureateship; application for professorship of modern history refused .	46
1765.	Tour of Scotland	49
1768.	Appointed professor of modern history at Cambridge	52
1769.	Published "Ode for Music" and "Ode on Duke of Grafton"	53
1771,	July 30. Died	55

ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD.[1]

THE curfew[2] tolls the knell of parting[3] day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,[4]
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,[5]
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering[6] landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,[7]

[1] This poem was begun in 1742, but not finished until 1750, nor published until 1751, undergoing in the mean time many alterations; several stanzas were omitted from the first completed form. It is perhaps the most widely known poem in the English language, and has been translated into various languages, both of ancient and of modern Europe. There can be no stronger proof of the universal interest which attaches to the poem.

It is generally conceded to be Gray's greatest work. Byron says: "It is the corner stone of his glory." Hales says that it deals with the obstinate questionings of the soul "in no lofty, philosophical manner, but in a simple, humble, unpretentious way, always with the truest and broadest humanity." Another thinks that "by this poem he will be known forever, alike by the lettered and the unlettered." Every lover of poetry knows this poem by heart.

[2] French, *couvre-feu*. Origin of? Purpose?

[3] "Parting" means what?

[4] Note special poetic property of the line. Why "wind"?

[5] Note the alliteration in this line. Try how many transformations can be made, preserving the sense of the line.

[6] Note "glimmering." Define.

[7] Has. Subject?

Save where the beetle wheels his droning[1] flight,
And drowsy[2] tinklings lull[3] the distant folds;[4]

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled[5] tower
The moping[6] owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wand'ring near her secret[7] bower,[8]
Molest her ancient solitary reign.[9]

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew tree's shade,[10]
Where heaves the turf in many a mold'ring heap,
Each in his narrow cell forever laid,
The rude[11] Forefathers of the hamlet[12] sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing[13] Morn,[14]
The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion,[15] or the echoing horn,[16]
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.[17]

[1] "Droning." Define, and explain its effect.

[2] Note the double duty of "drowsy."

[3] Why is "lull" better than "still"?

[4] "Folds." What figure of speech?

[5] What suggestion in "ivy-mantled"?

[6] Softer than "hooting" or "wailing."

[7] "Secret." Literal meaning of?

[8] Is "bower" entirely apt?

[9] What is the general effect of the first three stanzas? Point out the words and phrases that produce this effect.

[10] The branches of the elms interlacing above form, as it were, cathedral arches. The yew tree has both sacred and patriotic associations.

[11] Unlearned. [12] A little home. Cf. the Scotch, *hame*.

[13] Cf. with "incense" the words "odorous," "fragrance," "perfume." What is there more in the word used?

[14] One MS. reads: "Forever sleep; the breezy call of Morn."

[15] The same MS. has: "Or chanticleer so shrill." The present reading is more effective and, besides, removes a foreign word.

[16] "Echoing horn" of whom?

[17] Note that "bed" is literal, and not figurative.

For them no more the blazing hearth[1] shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care;[2]
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.[3]

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow[4] oft the stubborn glebe[5] has broke;[6]
How jocund did they drive their team afield![7]
How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,[8]
Their homely[9] joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals[10] of the poor.[11]

The boast of heraldry,[12] the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits[13] alike th' inevitable hour.
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.[14]

Nor you, ye Proud, impute to these[15] the fault,
If Mem'ry[16] o'er their tomb no trophies[17] raise,
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault[18]
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.[19]

1 What figure in "blazing hearth"?
2 Is "ply her evening care" a good expression?
3 Cf. lines 23, 24, with The Cotter's Saturday Night, lines 21, 22.
4 "Furrow." What figure? 5 Define. 6 Note "has broke."
7 "Afield" is an adverb. 8 Note personification.
9 One MS. has "rustic" in place of "homely."
10 History or records. 11 Note the questionable rime in this stanza.
12 "Heraldry" here stands for those who, having nothing in themselves to boast of, are satisfied to boast of the deeds of their ancestors.
13 Most modern editions read "await."
14 "A literal translation from the Latin of Bartholinus" (HAYLEY).
15 Who? 16 What figure? 17 Define.
18 Meaning? Cf. lines 15, 16.
19 Lines 39, 40, suggest the pompous funeral ceremonies attending the ob-

Can storied urn[1] or animated[2] bust
Back to its mansion[3] call the fleeting breath?
Can Honor's voice[4] provoke[5] the silent dust,
Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull, cold ear of Death?[6]

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;[7]
Hands that the rod[8] of empire might have swayed,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.[9]

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
Rich with the spoils of time,[10] did ne'er unroll;
Chill[11] Penury repressed[12] their noble rage,[13]
And froze the genial current of the soul.[14]

Full many a gem of purest ray serene[15]
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village Hampden,[16] that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood;

sequies of the titled proud, whose tombs are under the pavements of the sanctuary. Compare the fourth stanza.

[1] "Storied urn," an urn with *some* of the deeds of the departed inscribed.

[2] Lifelike. [3] "Mansion" means what? Latin, *maneo*.

[4] "Honor's voice," i.e., words of praise or honor.

[5] Call forth, i.e., back to life. [6] Is this stanza in any sense ironical?

[7] "Celestial fire," heavenly inspiration.

[8] One MS. reads "reins" in place of "rod."

[9] Cowper has "awful lyre;" Cowley has "living lyre;" Pope has "living harp." The epithet is hardly explicable, though the force of it is plainly felt. [10] What are "the spoils of time"? [11] "Chill" is active.

[12] One MS. reads "depressed." [13] Enthusiasm.

[14] This stanza and the following contain together an implied simile.

[15] "Purest ray serene," a Miltonic arrangement of epithets.

[16] John Hampden, a cousin of Oliver Cromwell, in 1636 refused to pay the

Some mute inglorious [1] Milton [2] here may rest,
Some Cromwell [3] guiltless of his country's blood.

Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their history in a nation's eyes,[4]

Their lot forbade;[5] nor circumscribed alone
Their growing virtues,[6] but their crimes confined;[7]
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,[8]

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,[9]
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride [10]
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.[11]

Far from the madding [12] crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;[13]

ship-money tax levied by Charles I. ("the little tyrant"). He was wounded in the fight at Chalgrove Field, and died of his wound June 24, 1643.

1 "Mute" and therefore "inglorious."

2 Milton, the eminent English poet (1608–1674). What are his chief works?

3 Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) was the master spirit of the great revolution. The line seems to imply that Gray was affected with the prejudice against Cromwell existing during the eighteenth century. These references are examples of the figure antonomasia.

4 Note that lines 61–64 are objective phrases.

5 "Their lot forbade" them to be what?

6 "Their growing virtues," i.e., the growth of virtues.

7 "Confined," restrained.

8 Lines 67, 68, probably another allusion to Cromwell.

9 Lines 69, 70, seem labored, or to want spontaneity.

10 To fawn upon and flatter the luxurious and proud.

11 With eulogistic verse.

12 "Madding" is passive.

13 In this couplet the grammatical connection is not close. Arrange the order of words so as to give the meaning.

Along the cool sequestered vale of life[1]
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect
Some frail memorial[2] still erected nigh,
With uncouth[3] rimes[4] and shapeless sculpture[5] decked,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, spelled by th' unlettered Muse,[6]
The place of fame and elegy supply;
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach[7] the rustic moralist to die.

For who, to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing, ling'ring look behind?[8]

On some fond breast the parting[9] soul relies,
Some pious drops[10] the closing eye requires;
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires.[11]

[1] "Cool sequestered vale of life" is antithetical.

[2] "Frail memorial," a crumbling headstone.

[3] In the modern sense of awkward.

[4] It is likely that Gray spelled it "rhymes," following the accepted bad spelling of the word.

[5] "Shapeless sculpture," inartistic carving. Cf. "storied urn" and "animated bust," line 41.

[6] "Unlettered Muse," i.e., uncultured poet.

[7] "That teach," concord of sense rather than of form.

[8] This is a difficult stanza. Observe that there are two interpretations of the thought in the first two lines. Note the poetic artifices in the last line.

[9] Cf. line 1.

[10] "Pious drops" not *of*, but *for*, "the closing eye."

[11] "Ev'n from the tomb," etc., i.e., "The fires of former affection are still alive beneath our ashes;" "Even after the spark of life is quenched, the yearning for remembrance must still be felt."

For thee,[1] who mindful of th' unhonored Dead[2]
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate,
If chance,[3] by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

Haply[4] some hoary-headed swain[5] may say,
"Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn[6]
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.

"There at the foot of yonder nodding beech,
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,[7]
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore[8] upon the brook that babbles by.

"Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,[9]
Mutt'ring his wayward fancies he would rove,
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or crazed with care, or crossed in hopeless love.[10]

"One morn I missed him on the customed[11] hill,
Along the heath and near his fav'rite tree;
Another[12] came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

1 The poet.

2 "Unhonored Dead," "the rude Forefathers of the hamlet."

3 Perchance. 4 Perhaps. 5 Here "rustic."

6 "Peep of dawn." Cf. Milton's Lycidas, line 26:

"Under the opening eyelids of the morn."

7 Lines 101, 102. Cf. As You Like It, ii. i: "Under an oak whose antique root peeps out." Note the false rime. 8 Look intently.

9 "Smiling as in scorn." Why cannot this limit "wood"?

10 After this stanza the original MS. had the following:

"Him have we seen the greenwood side along,
As o'er the heath we hied, our labor done;
Oft as the wood lark piped her farewell song,
With wistful eyes, pursue the setting sun."

11 Accustomed. 12 "Another" what?

"The next with dirges due in sad array
Slow through the churchway path we saw him borne.
Approach and read (for thou[1] canst read) the lay,
Graved on the stone beneath yon agèd thorn."

THE EPITAPH.

Here rests[2] *his head upon the lap of Earth*
A Youth, to Fortune and to Fame unknown.[3]
Fair Science frowned[4] *not on his humble birth,*
And Melancholy marked him for her own.

Large was his bounty,[5] *and his soul sincere,*[6]
Heav'n did a recompense as largely send;
He gave to Misery all he had,[7] *a tear,*
He gained from Heav'n ('twas all he wished) a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw[8] *his frailties from their dread abode,*
(*There they alike in trembling hope repose,*)
The bosom of his Father and his God.[9]

[1] "For thou canst read." Emphasis is on "thou." The "swain" could *not* read.

[2] What is subject of "rests"? What effect would be produced by putting a comma after "rests" and after "Earth"?

[3] Note the tender pathos of lines 117, 118.

[4] "Fair Science frowned." Note the antithesis, "fair," "frowned." How reconcile the apparent contradiction? Cf. stanzas 13, 16.

[5] Latin, *bonitas*.

[6] "Sincere" also is here used in its literal or Latin sense.

[7] "All he had," an appositional phrase.

[8] "Draw," complementary infinitive, as "to disclose" is.

[9] This line is appositive.

ODE ON A DISTANT PROSPECT OF ETON COLLEGE.[1]

Ἄνθρωπος· ικανὴ πρόφασις εἰς τὸ δυστυχεῖν.[2]

MENANDER.

YE distant spires, ye antique towers,
 That crown[3] the wat'ry glade,
Where grateful Science[4] still adores
 Her Henry's[5] holy Shade;
And ye,[6] that from the stately brow
Of Windsor's heights the expanse below
 Of grove, of lawn, of mead survey,
Whose turf, whose shade, whose flowers among
Wanders the hoary Thames along[7]
 His silver-winding[8] way.

1 "This was the first poem of Gray's that appeared in print. It was published in folio in 1747, and republished with some other odes in 1751, when for the first time it attracted attention. It cannot be said to be a very popular poem, perhaps because it is too personal. It seems to lack the apparent spontaneity of the Elegy, and the artistic qualities of the two great odes. However, it expresses very naturally the feelings of a thoughtful and mature man when viewing a scene which recalls the days of his youth" (GOSSE).

2 "Because I am a man: a sufficient excuse for being miserable." This was the reply given to the question, "Why are you so miserable?"

3 Adorn; ornament. 4 "Grateful Science." Cf. Elegy, line 119.

5 Eton College, on the Thames, was founded by Henry VI. in 1440. Shakespeare calls him "holy King Henry." Cf. Gray's comment in The Bard, p. 45, Note 7.

6 The towers of Windsor Castle.

7 In lines 7, 8, the Thames is personified in classic fashion.

8 Note the compound epithet.

Ah happy hills, ah pleasing shade,
Ah fields beloved in vain,[1]
Where once my careless childhood strayed,
A stranger yet to pain!
I feel the gales, that from ye blow,
A momentary bliss bestow,
As waving fresh their gladsome wing
My weary soul they seem to soothe,
And, redolent of joy and youth,[2]
To breathe a second spring.[3]

Say, Father Thames, for thou hast seen
Full many a sprightly race
Disporting on thy margent green[4]
The paths of pleasure trace,
Who foremost now delight to cleave
With pliant arm thy glassy wave?
The captive[5] linnet which inthrall?[5]
What idle progeny succeed[6]
To chase the rolling circle's speed,[7]
Or urge the flying ball?

While some on earnest business bent
Their murmuring labors ply[8]
'Gainst graver hours, that bring constraint[9]
To sweeten liberty;

[1] The promise of happiness and success, which his boyhood days held out to him while at Eton, has not been realized.

[2] Cf. "And bees their honey redolent of spring"—DRYDEN'S Fable on the Pythagorean System (GRAY).

[3] "To breathe," etc., i.e., to recall vividly the days of youth.

[4] "Margent green." Which is the noun?

[5] Note "captive" and "inthrall."

[6] "Succeed," a literal use.

[7] The MS. reads: "To chase the hoop's illusive speed." Which is better?

[8] The busy hum of study.

[9] Constraint (restraint) sweetens liberty. Cf. "Toil sweetens rest."

Some bold adventurers disdain
The limits of their little reign,
And unknown regions dare descry;[1]
Still as they run they look behind,[2]
They hear a voice in every wind,
And snatch a fearful joy.

Gay hope is theirs by fancy fed,[3]
Less pleasing when possessed;
The tear forgot as soon as shed,
The sunshine of the breast;
Theirs buxom[4] health of rosy hue,
Wild wit, invention ever new,
And lively cheer of vigor born;
The thoughtless day, the easy night,
The spirits pure, the slumbers light,
That fly th' approach of morn.

Alas, regardless of their doom,
The little victims play!
No sense have they of ills to come,
Nor care beyond to-day;[5]
Yet see how all around 'em wait[6]
The Ministers of human fate,
And black Misfortune's baleful train!
Ah, show them where in ambush stand,[7]
To seize their prey, the murtherous[8] band!
Ah, tell them, they are men!

1 Explore or seek. 2 "Still as they run," etc., very true to nature.
3 "Gay hope," etc. Cf. a common saying.
4 "Buxom" is here used in its modern sense. An old form sometimes found is *boughsome*, i.e., like the *bough* of a tree, graceful in movement.
5 Lines 51–54. Pope's philosophy is better expressed. See his Essay on Man, I. lines 81–86. 6 "Yet see," etc. Cf. Progress of Poesy, ii. 1.
7 To whom is this line addressed? 8 Old form of "murderous."

These shall the fury Passions[1] tear,
The vultures of the mind,
Disdainful Anger, pallid Fear,
And Shame that skulks behind;
Or pining Love shall waste their youth,
Or Jealousy with rankling tooth,
That inly gnaws the secret heart,
And Envy wan, and faded Care,
Grim-visaged comfortless Despair,
And Sorrow's piercing dart.

Ambition this shall tempt to rise,
Then whirl the wretch from high,
To bitter Scorn a sacrifice,
And grinning Infamy.
The stings of Falsehood those shall try,
And hard Unkindness' altered eye,
That mocks the tear it forced to flow;
And keen Remorse with blood defiled,
And moody Madness laughing wild[2]
Amid severest woe.

Lo! in the vale of years beneath
A grisly[3] troop are seen,
The painful family of Death,
More hideous than their queen.
This racks the joints, this fires the veins,[4]
That every laboring sinew strains,
Those in the deeper vitals rage;

[1] Cf. "frantic Passions," Progress of Poesy, line 16. Passions fierce as the mythical Furies. What is the predominant figure in the three stanzas, lines 51–80? Note the aptness of the epithets.

[2] "Madness laughing in his ireful mood"—DRYDEN's Palamon and Arcite, ii. 582 (GRAY).

[3] Not same as "grizzly." Cf. The Bard, line 44.

[4] Note the sound and sense of this line.

Lo, Poverty, to fill the band,
That numbs the soul with icy hand,[1]
And slow-consuming Age.

To each his sufferings; all are men,
Condemned alike to groan,
The tender for another's pain,
The unfeeling for his own.
Yet ah! why should they know their fate?[2]
Since sorrow never comes too late,
And happiness too swiftly flies.
Thought would destroy their paradise.
No more; where ignorance is bliss,
'Tis folly to be wise.

[1] Cf. Elegy, lines 51, 52.

[2] The same thought is found in old rime:

"If ills ne'er come, our fears are vain;
And if they do, fear but augments the pain."

THE PROGRESS OF POESY.

A PINDARIC ODE.

Φωνᾶντα συνετοῖσι.[1]
PINDAR, *Olymp.* ii.

I. 1.

AWAKE, Æolian[2] lyre, awake,[3]
And give to rapture all thy trembling strings.
From Helicon's harmonious springs[4]
A thousand rills[5] their mazy progress take;
The laughing flowers,[6] that round them blow,[7]

1 "Vocal to the intelligent [only]."

2 Æolia, a district of Greece, the fabled birth country of poetry.

3 "Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp" (Psalm lvii. 8).

"The subject and simile, as usual with Pindar, are united. The various sources of poetry, which gives life and luster to all it touches, are here described; its quiet, majestic progress enriching every subject (otherwise dry and barren) with a pomp of diction and luxuriant harmony of numbers, and its more rapid and irresistible course, when swollen and hurried away by the conflict of tumultuous passions" (GRAY).

4 Helicon was a mountain in Bœotia, fabled as the abode of the Muses, to whom the two fountains it contained were sacred.

5 Note the music of the word "rills."

6 "Laughing flowers," the ornaments of poetry.

7 Bloom.

GENERAL NOTE.—This poem was finished in 1745, but not published until 1757, when it appeared in quarto form with The Bard. The poems were not

Drink life and fragrance as they flow.
Now the rich stream of music winds along,
Deep, majestic, smooth, and strong,[1]
Through verdant vales,[2] and Ceres'[3] golden reign;[4]
Now rolling down the steep amain,[5]
Headlong, impetuous, see it pour;
The rocks and nodding groves rebellow to the roar.[6]

I. 2.[7]

Oh! Sovereign of the willing soul,
Parent of sweet and solemn-breathing airs,
Enchanting shell![8] the sullen Cares
And frantic Passions hear thy soft control.

[1] "Note the movement of the line" (HALES).

[2] "Verdant vales," i.e., pastoral poetry. [3] Goddess of harvest.

[4] "Golden reign," i.e., the yellow or golden harvest.

[5] With force.

[6] Lines 10–12 are suggestive of the higher forms of poetry, as epic or dramatic.

[7] Lines 13–24. "Power of harmony to calm the turbulent sallies of the soul" (GRAY).

[8] According to the myth, the first lyre was made by Mercury from a tortoise shell. Cf. Collins's Ode to the Passions, line 3.

popular at first, their want of success being due to the obscurity which, in the case of The Bard particularly, was the chief source of sublimity, it being cast in the form of a prophetic vision. Gray was persuaded to add some explanatory notes, which he did, saying: "As to the notes, I do it out of spite, because the public did not understand the two odes, though the first was not very dark, and the second alluded to a few very common facts to be found in any sixpenny history of England, by way of question and answer, for the use of children." These odes are called "Pindaric," and are constructed on Greek models of Pindar. They are composed of nine stanzas, symmetrically arranged in groups of three (ternaries), the corresponding stanzas of all the ternaries being so exactly intercorrespondent that even unusual poetic forms are repeated in corresponding lines of each ternary. The technical Greek names for these three parts are *strophe*, *antistrophe*, and *epodos*. This manner of construction of odes does not seem to have been a favorite with English poets.

On Thracia's[1] hills the Lord of War
Has curbed the fury of his car,
And dropped his thirsty lance[2] at thy command.
Perching on the sceptered hand
Of Jove, thy magic lulls the feathered king[3]
With ruffled plumes and flagging wing;
Quenched in dark clouds of slumber lie
The terror of his beak, and lightnings of his eye.

I. 3.[4]

Thee the voice, the dance, obey,
Tempered to[5] thy warbled lay.
O'er Idalia's[6] velvet-green[7]
The rosy-crownèd Loves are seen
On Cytherea's[8] day
With antic[9] Sports, and blue-eyed Pleasures,
Frisking light in frolic measures;
Now pursuing, now retreating,
Now in circling troops they meet;
To brisk notes in cadence beating
Glance their many-twinkling[10] feet.
Slow melting strains their Queen's approach declare;[11]
Where'er she turns the Graces homage pay.

1 Mars, the god of war, was worshiped in Thrace.

2 Note the force of "thirsty lance."

3 The eagle, "feathered king," was the bird of Jove.

4 Lines 25–41. "Power of harmony to produce all the graces of motion in the body" (GRAY).

5 "Tempered to," i.e., in rhythm with; in time to.

6 "Idalia," for Idalium, a town of Cyprus, a favorite seat of Venus.

7 Note the compound "velvet-green." 8 Another name for Venus.

9 Grotesque, because old-fashioned. Cf. "antique."

10 A curious but very expressive epithet.

11 The first eleven lines have a rapid movement, in perfect keeping with the action described. What is the measure? Note the abrupt change to a longer verse and the resultant slower movement.

With arms sublime,[1] that float upon the air,
In gliding state[2] she wins her easy way;
O'er her warm cheek, and rising bosom, move
The bloom of young Desire, and purple light of Love.[3]

II. 1.[4]

Man's feeble race what ills await!
Labor, and Penury, the racks of Pain,
Disease, and Sorrow's weeping train,
And Death, sad refuge from the storms of Fate!
The fond[5] complaint, my Song, disprove,
And justify the laws of Jove.[6]
Say, has he given in vain the heavenly Muse?
Night, and all her sickly dews,
Her specters wan, and birds of boding cry,
He gives to range the dreary sky;
Till down[7] the eastern cliffs afar
Hyperion's[8] march they spy, and glittering shafts of war.[9]

II. 2.[10]

In climes beyond[11] the solar road,[12]
Where shaggy forms o'er ice-built mountains roam,

1 Uplifted (the literal sense).

2 "Gliding state." The gods did not *walk*.

3 "Purple light of Love." Purple, being a *royal* color, suggests the power of love.

4 Lines 42–53. "To compensate the real and imaginary ills of life, the Muse was given to mankind by the same Providence that sends the day, by its cheerful presence, to dispel the gloom and terrors of the night" (GRAY).

5 Foolish.

6 "And justify," etc. Cf. Milton's Paradise Lost, i. line 26.

7 Why not "up"?

8 Father of Helios, god of the sun.

9 "Glittering shafts of war," i.e., sunbeams. Why "shafts of war"?

10 Lines 54–65. "Extensive influence of poetic genius over the remotest and most uncivilized nations; its connection with liberty and the virtues that naturally attend on it" (GRAY).

11 "Beyond," south of the equator.

12 "Solar road," path of the sun.

The Muse has broke the twilight gloom [1]
To cheer the shivering Native's dull abode.
And oft, beneath the odorous shade
Of Chile's boundless forests laid,
She deigns to hear the savage youth repeat,
In loose numbers [2] wildly sweet,[3]
Their feather-cinctured Chiefs, and dusky Loves.[4]
Her track, where'er the Goddess roves,
Glory pursue, and generous Shame,
The unconquerable Mind, and Freedom's holy flame.

II. 3.[5]

Woods, that wave o'er Delphi's [6] steep,
Isles, that crown the Ægean deep,[7]
Fields, that cool Ilissus [8] laves,
Or where Mæander's [9] amber waves

[1] "Twilight gloom," intellectual and moral darkness.

[2] "Loose numbers," irregular but rhythmical verse. "Numbers" is often used for "verse." [3] Note the melody of line 61.

[4] "Their feather-cinctured," etc., i.e., songs of war and love.

[5] Lines 66–82. "Progress of Poetry from Greece to Italy, and from Italy to England. Chaucer was not unacquainted with the writings of Dante or of Petrarch. The earl of Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyatt had traveled in Italy and formed their taste there. Spenser imitated the Italian writers; Milton improved on them; but this school expired soon after the Restoration, and a new one arose on the French model, which has subsisted ever since" (GRAY).

[6] "Delphi." Old form of word is "Delphos." Here was the oracle of Apollo, god of music. It is at the foot of Parnassus.

[7] Cf. Byron's Song of the Greek Bard, Don Juan, Canto III.:

"The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece!
Where burning Sappho loved and sung."

Cf. also Milton's Comus, lines 21–23.

"That like to rich and various gems inlay
The unadornèd bosom of the deep."

[8] A river of Athens.

[9] Miletus, on the Mæander, was an intellectual center, the birthplace of many famous in letters and philosophy.

In lingering labyrinths creep,[1]
 How do your tuneful echoes languish,
 Mute, but to the voice of Anguish!
Where each old poetic mountain
 Inspiration breathed around;
Every shade and hallowed fountain
 Murmured deep a solemn sound;
Till the sad Nine[2] in Greece's evil hour
 Left their Parnassus for the Latian plains.[3]
Alike they scorn the pomp of tyrant Power,
 And coward Vice, that revels in her chains.
When Latium[4] had her lofty spirit lost,
They sought, O Albion![5] next thy sea-encircled coast.

III. 1.

 Far from the sun[6] and summer gale,
In thy green lap[7] was Nature's Darling[8] laid,
What time,[9] where lucid Avon[10] strayed,
 To him the mighty Mother[11] did unveil
Her awful[12] face. The dauntless[13] Child
Stretched forth his little arms, and smiled.
This pencil take (she said) whose colors clear[14]
Richly paint the vernal year;

1 Note the alliteration and the slow movement. 2 The Muses.

3 Lines 77, 78, allude to the capture of Constantinople in 1453. After the capture of the city the men of letters fled the country, passing westward to Italy, and thence northwestward. This is known as the "renaissance" of learning in Europe. 4 Italy.

5 England. Inquire as to the origin of this name.

6 "Far from the sun." England lies far to the north.

7 "Green lap." England is noted for its verdant fields.

8 "Nature's Darling," Shakespeare (GRAY).

9 "What time," Latin idiom.

10 The word means "water" or "stream." 11 Nature.

12 In the sense of inspiring fear with reverence.

13 Not repelled by the "awful face."

14 Lines 89–94 suggest Shakespeare's power in what?

Thine too these golden[1] keys, immortal Boy!
This can unlock the gates of Joy,
Of Horror that, and thrilling Fears,
Or ope the sacred source[2] of sympathetic Tears.

III. 2.

Nor second He,[3] that rode sublime
Upon the seraph wings of Ecstasy,[4]
The secrets of th' Abyss[5] to spy,
He passed the flaming bounds of Place and Time;[6]
The living Throne, the sapphire blaze,[7]
Where Angels tremble, while they gaze,
He saw; but, blasted with excess of light,
Closed his eyes in endless night.[8]
Behold, where Dryden's less presumptuous car
Wide o'er the fields of Glory bear
Two Coursers[9] of ethereal race,
With necks in thunder clothed, and long-resounding pace.[10]

III. 3.

Hark, his hands the lyre explore!
Bright-eyed Fancy hovering o'er

[1] Note the epithet "golden." [2] Why "source" rather than "font"?
[3] Milton. [4] "Upon the seraph wings," etc. Cf. Elegy, line 48.
[5] "Abyss," space that was void.
[6] Gray suggests by this line that Milton wrote of what there was before there was any place (outside of heaven and hell) or time as we understand it.
[7] "The living Throne," etc. Cf. Milton's Il Penseroso, line 53, and Paradise Lost, vi. lines 758, 771.
[8] Lines 101, 102. Milton did not lose his sight in writing Paradise Lost. Liberty with facts is a poet's license.
[9] "Two Coursers," probably alluding to the dramatic and lyric verse of Dryden.
[10] Is this line bombastic? Gray says that it was "meant to express the stately march and sounding energy of Dryden's rimes." Gray's admiration for Dryden is boundless. He says, in effect, that he learned the art of verse from a study of that poet.

Scatters from her pictured urn[1]
Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn.[2]
But ah! 'tis heard no more[3]—
Oh! Lyre divine, what daring Spirit
Wakes thee now? though he inherit
Nor the pride, nor ample pinion,
That the Theban Eagle[4] bear
Sailing with supreme dominion
Through the azure deep of air,
Yet oft before his infant eyes would run
Such forms, as glitter in the Muse's ray
With orient[5] hues, unborrowed of the Sun;
Yet shall he mount, and keep his distant way
Beyond the limits of a vulgar[6] fate,
Beneath the Good how far—but far above the Great.[7]

[1] Note the metaphor in this line.

[2] "Thoughts," etc., i.e., some words excite the imagination, others arouse the emotions.

[3] "We have had in our language no other odes of the sublime kind than that of Dryden on St. Cecilia's Day" (GRAY).

[4] "Theban Eagle," Pindar. "Διὸς πρὸς ὄρνιχα θεῖον ("The divine bird of Jove") (Pindar's Olymp. ii.). Pindar compares himself to that bird, and his enemies to ravens that croak and clamor in vain below, while it pursues its flight, regardless of their noise" (GRAY).

[5] Brilliant (an associated meaning).

[6] Common; from the Latin, *vulgus*.

[7] "Beneath the Good," etc., i.e., the *good* far outshine the merely *great*.

THE BARD.[1]

A PINDARIC ODE.

I. 1.

"Ruin seize thee, ruthless King![2]
Confusion on thy banners wait,
Though fanned by Conquest's crimson wing[3]
They mock the air with idle state.[4]
Helm, nor hauberk's[5] twisted mail,
Nor even thy virtues, Tyrant, shall avail[6]
To save thy secret soul from nightly[7] fears,
From Cambria's[8] curse, from Cambria's tears!"

[1] "This ode is founded on a tradition, current in Wales, that Edward I., when he completed the conquest of that country, ordered all the bards that fell into his hands to be put to death" (Gray). It is needless to say that Edward did no such thing, and Gray accepted the tradition, not as having any basis of fact, but purely for poetic use, and perhaps for a moral purpose, "to show the retributive justice that follows an act of tyranny and wickedness."

[2] Note the alliteration. [3] What expressive figure in the line?

[4] "Mocking the air with colors idly spread" (Shakespeare's King John, v. i).

[5] "The hauberk was a texture of steel ringlets, or rings interwoven, forming a coat of mail that sat close to the body and adapted itself to every motion" (Gray).

[6] It was said in praise of the king: "Velox est ad veniam, ad vindictam tardus." [7] Nocturnal. [8] Another name for Wales.

Such were the sounds that o'er the crested pride[1]
Of the first Edward scattered wild dismay,
As down the steep of Snowdon's[2] shaggy[3] side
He wound with toilsome march his long array.
Stout Glo'ster[4] stood aghast in speechless trance;
"To arms!" cried Mortimer,[5] and couched his quivering lance.[6]

I. 2.

On a rock, whose haughty brow
Frowns o'er old Conway's foaming flood,
Robed in the sable garb of woe,
With haggard eyes the Poet stood;
(Loose his beard and hoary hair
Streamed, like a meteor, to the troubled air[7])
And with a Master's hand, and Prophet's fire,
Struck the deep sorrows of his lyre.

"Hark, how each giant oak, and desert cave,
Sighs to the torrent's awful voice beneath!

1 "Crested pride." Cf. Elegy, line 33.

2 The Saxons gave this name to the range of mountains in southeastern Wales.

3 "Shaggy" suggests the great forests that covered the sides of the mountains.

4 "Gilbert de Clare, surnamed the Red, earl of Gloucester, and Hertford, son-in-law to King Edward" (GRAY).

5 "Edmond de Mortimer, lord of Wigmore. Gilbert de Clare and Edmond de Mortimer were both *lord marchers*, whose lands lay on the borders of Wales, and who probably accompanied the king in this expedition" (GRAY).

6 Lines 13, 14, emphasize the idea of "wild dismay."

7 "The image was taken from a well-known picture of Raphael, representing the Supreme Being in the vision of Ezekiel. There are two of these paintings (both believed original), one at Florence, the other at Paris" (GRAY). "Shone like a meteor, streaming to the wind" (MILTON'S Paradise Lost, i. 537).

O'er thee, O King! their hundred arms they wave,
Revenge on thee in hoarser murmurs[1] breathe;
Vocal no more, since Cambria's fatal day,
To high-born Hoel's[2] harp, or soft Llewellyn's lay.[3]

I. 3.

"Cold is Cadwallo's[4] tongue,
That hushed the stormy main;[5]
Brave Urien[4] sleeps upon his craggy bed;
Mountains, ye mourn in vain
Modred,[6] whose magic song
Made huge Plinlimmon[7] bow his cloud-topped head.
On dreary Arvon's[8] shore they lie,
Smeared with gore, and ghastly pale;
Far, far aloof th' affrighted ravens sail;
The famished Eagle screams, and passes by.[9]
Dear lost companions of my tuneful art,
Dear, as the light that visits these sad eyes,
Dear, as the ruddy drops that warm my heart,[10]
Ye died amidst your dying country's cries—

[1] "Hoarser murmurs." The epithet may be cumulative in meaning, or it may be like the occasional use of the comparative in Latin.

[2] Hoel was a famous bard. Some of his poems are still extant. He was a prince of North Wales, hence "high-born."

[3] "Soft Llewellyn's lay." The context seems to suggest that Llewellyn was a bard; yet it may refer to a poem celebrating him as a "tender-hearted prince." In an ode by another Welsh poet he is called "Llewellyn the mild."

[4] Cadwallo and Urien were bards. None of their songs are extant.

[5] "That hushed," etc., the poetic fancy that music influenced inanimate objects. See also line 34.

[6] Nothing is known of Modred.

[7] One of the loftiest mountains of Wales. The name appears to be a corruption of Pum-plumon (the "Five Beacons"), from the five piles of stones found on the mountains.

[8] "The shores of Caernarvonshire, opposite to the isle of Anglesey" (GRAY).

[9] Note the effect of lines 36–38 in producing the feeling of horror.

[10] Cf. Julius Cæsar, ii. i.

No more I weep. They do not sleep.[1]
On yonder cliffs, a grisly[2] band,
I see them sit, they linger yet,
Avengers of their native land;
With me in dreadful harmony they join,
And weave with bloody hands the tissue of thy line."[3]

II. 1.

"Weave the warp, and weave the woof,
The winding sheet of Edward's race.
Give ample room, and verge enough
The characters of hell to trace.
Mark the year, and mark the night,
When Severn shall reëcho with affright
The shrieks of death, through Berkeley's roofs that ring,
Shrieks of an agonizing King![4]
She-Wolf[5] of France, with unrelenting fangs,
That tear'st the bowels of thy mangled Mate,[6]
From thee be born, who o'er thy country hangs[7]
The scourge of Heaven. What Terrors round him wait!
Amazement in his van, with Flight combined,
And Sorrow's faded form, and Solitude behind.

[1] Note the sectional rime in this line; also in line 45, though "sit" and "yet" are not perfect rimes.

[2] Cf. Eton College, line 82.

[3] "And weave," etc. Gray in his ode, The Fatal Sisters, represents the Fates of Gothic mythology as weaving the destinies of those doomed to die in battle.

[4] Lines 55, 56, allude to the cruel murder of Edward II. in Berkeley Castle, in 1327. He was the first "Prince of Wales."

[5] "Isabel of France, Edward II.'s queen" (GRAY).

[6] Line 58 alludes to the manner of Edward's murder. Dryden, in his tragedy, Edward II., gives a different account. Hume, in his history, adheres to the first account.

[7] "Triumphs of Edward III. in France" (GRAY).

II. 2.

"Mighty Victor, mighty Lord!
Low on his funeral couch he lies![1]
No pitying heart, no eye, afford
A tear to grace his obsequies.
Is the sable Warrior[2] fled?
Thy son is gone. He rests among the Dead.
The Swarm,[3] that in thy noontide beam[4] were born?
Gone to salute the rising Morn.[5]
Fair laughs the Morn, and soft the Zephyr blows,
While proudly riding o'er the azure realm[6]
In gallant trim the gilded Vessel goes;[7]
Youth on the prow, and Pleasure at the helm;
Regardless of the sweeping Whirlwind's sway,[8]
That, hushed in grim repose, expects his evening prey.[9]

II. 3.

"Fill high the sparkling bowl,[10]
The rich repast prepare,
Reft of a crown, he yet may share the feast;
Close by the regal chair

1 "Death of that king, abandoned by his children, and even robbed in his last moments by his courtiers and his mistress" (GRAY).

2 "Edward, the Black Prince, dead some time before his father" (GRAY).

3 Note the tone of the word.

4 "Noontide beam," i.e., in the days of prosperity and peace.

5 "Rising Morn," i.e., the new king. "Le roi est mort: vive le roi!"

6 "Azure realm" means what?

7 Note the alliteration in this line.

8 Lines 71–74 allude to the "magnificence of Richard II.'s reign. See Froissard and other contemporary writers" (GRAY).

9 Comment on the metaphor in lines 75, 76.

10 "Fill high," etc. "Richard II. (as we are told by Archbishop Scroop and the confederate lords in their manifesto, by Thomas of Walsingham and

Fell Thirst and Famine scowl[1]
A baleful smile[2] upon their baffled Guest.
Heard ye the din of battle bray,[3]
Lance to lance, and horse to horse?
Long Years of havoc urge their destined course,
And through the kindred squadrons mow their way.
Ye Towers[4] of Julius, London's lasting shame,
With many a foul and midnight murther fed,
Revere his Consort's[5] faith, his Father's[6] fame,
And spare the meek Usurper's holy[7] head.
Above, below, the rose of snow,[8]
Twined with her blushing[8] foe, we spread;
The bristled Boar[9] in infant gore[10]
Wallows beneath the thorny shade.[11]
Now, Brothers, bending o'er th' accursèd loom
Stamp we our vengeance deep, and ratify his doom.

all the older writers) was starved to death. The story of his assassination by Sir Piers of Exon is of much later date" (GRAY). Find this later story.

1 Note the personification and the alliteration in lines 81, 82.

2 Note the force of "scowl a baleful smile."

3 "Ruinous wars of York and Lancaster" (GRAY).

4 "Henry VI., George, duke of Clarence, Edward V., Richard, duke of York, etc., believed to be murdered secretly in the Tower of London. The oldest part of that structure is by tradition attributed to Julius Cæsar" (GRAY).

5 "Margaret of Anjou, a woman of heroic spirit, who struggled hard to save her husband and her crown" (GRAY). 6 "Henry V." (GRAY).

7 "Henry VI., very near being canonized. The line of Lancaster had no right of inheritance to the crown" (GRAY). Who was first of the Lancastrian kings? How did he get the crown? Cf. Eton College, line 4.

8 The white and red roses, devices of York and Lancaster.

9 "The silver boar was the badge of Richard III., whence he was usually known in his own time by the name of 'the Boar'" (GRAY). Cf. Shakespeare's Richard III., iv. v.

10 "Infant gore" alludes to the murder of the princes in the Tower. Cf. Shakespeare's Richard III., iii. iv.

11 "Thorny shade." The helmet of Richard, with his "silver boar," was found under a thorn tree after the battle of Bosworth Field. The allusion is to his death in that battle.

III. 1.

"Edward, lo! to sudden fate
(Weave we the woof. The thread is spun.)
Half of thy heart we consecrate.[1]
(The web is wove. The work is done.)"

"Stay, oh stay! nor thus forlorn
Leave me unblessed, unpitied, here to mourn;
In yon bright track, that fires the western skies,
They melt, they vanish from my eyes.
But oh! what solemn scenes on Snowdon's height
Descending slow their glitt'ring skirts unroll?
Visions of glory, spare my aching sight,
Ye unborn Ages, crowd not on my soul!
No more our long-lost Arthur we bewail.[2]
All hail, ye genuine Kings, Britannia's Issue, hail![3]

III. 2.

"Girt with many a Baron bold
Sublime their starry fronts they rear;

[1] "Half of thy heart," etc. "Eleanor of Castile died a few years after the conquest of Wales. The heroic proof she gave of her affection for her lord is well known. [What is the story?] The monuments of his regret and sorrow for the loss of her are still to be seen at Northampton, Geddington, Waltham, and other places" (GRAY). These monuments, the "Eleanor crosses," were erected at each stopping place for the night on the journey from Hardby, where she died, to Westminster. There were thirteen or fifteen of them. Three yet remain. Charing Cross, in London, was the site of one of them; but the one there now is a facsimile of the original. These were all of exquisite Gothic art.

[2] Line 109 alludes to "the common belief of the Welsh nation that King Arthur was still alive in fairyland, and would return again to reign over Britain" (GRAY).

[3] Line 110 alludes to the "accession of the line of Tudor. Both Merlin and Taliessin had prophesied that the Welsh should regain their sovereignty over this island, which seemed to be accomplished in the house of Tudor" (GRAY). Who was first of the Tudor line? Trace his Welsh origin.

And gorgeous Dames, and Statesmen old
In bearded majesty, appear.
In the midst a Form divine!
Her eye proclaims her of the Briton Line;
Her lion port,[1] her awe-commanding face,
Attempered sweet to virgin grace.[2]
What strings symphonious tremble in the air,
What strains of vocal transport round her play![3]
Hear from the grave, great Taliessin,[4] hear;
They breathe a soul to animate thy clay.
Bright Rapture calls, and soaring, as she sings,
Waves in the eye of Heaven her many-colored wings.

III. 3.

"The verse adorn again
Fierce War, and faithful Love,
And Truth severe, by fairy Fiction dressed.[5]
In buskined measures move
Pale Grief, and pleasing Pain,
With Horror, Tyrant of the throbbing breast.[6]
A Voice as of the Cherub Choir,
Gales from blooming Eden bear;[7]
And distant warblings lessen on my ear,

1 "Speed, relating an audience given by Queen Elizabeth to Paul Dzialinski, ambassador of Poland, says: 'And thus she, lionlike rising, daunted the malapert orator no less with her stately port and majestical deporture than with the tartnesse of her princelie cheeckes'" (GRAY).

2 "Attempered sweet," etc. It was quite fashionable to flatter Queen Elizabeth. It is not to be doubted that she was a great sovereign, but there is some question as to her having been a sweet-tempered and gracious maiden.

3 What is the allusion in lines 119, 120?

4 "Taliessin, chief of the bards, flourished in the sixth century. His works are still preserved, and his memory held in high veneration, among his countrymen" (GRAY).

5 Lines 126, 127, allude to the allegory, Spenser's Faërie Queene.

6 Lines 128–130 describe Shakespeare, and the tragic stage.

7 Lines 131, 132, refer to Milton's Paradise Lost.

That lost in long futurity expire.[1]
Fond[2] impious Man, think'st thou, yon sanguine cloud,[3]
Raised by thy breath, has quenched the Orb of day?[4]
To-morrow he repairs the golden flood,
And warms the nations with redoubled ray.
Enough for me. With joy I see
The different doom our Fates assign.
Be thine Despair, and sceptered Care,
To triumph, and to die, are mine."

He spoke, and headlong from the mountain's height
Deep in the roaring tide he plunged to endless night.

[1] Lines 133, 134, indicate "the succession of poets after Milton's time" (GRAY). [2] Foolish. [3] "Sanguine cloud," i.e., war.
[4] "Orb of day," i.e., poetry. Cf. Progress of Poesy, ii. 1.

ODE ON THE DEATH OF A FAVORITE CAT,[1]

DROWNED IN A TUB OF GOLDFISHES.

'Twas on a lofty vase's side,
Where China's gayest art had dyed
The azure flowers, that blow;
Demurest of the tabby kind,
The pensive Selima, reclined,
Gazed on the lake below.

Her conscious tail her joy declared;
The fair round face, the snowy beard,
The velvet of her paws,
Her coat, that with the tortoise vies,
Her ears of jet, and emerald eyes,
She saw; and purred applause.

[1] Gray, in a letter to Walpole, March 1, 1747, says: "As one ought to be particularly careful to avoid blunders in a compliment of condolence, it would be a sensible satisfaction to me (before I testify my sorrow and the sincere part I take in your misfortune) to know for certain who it is I lament. I knew Zara and Selima (Selima, was it, or Fatima?); or rather I knew them both together, for I cannot justly say which was which. Then, as to your handsome Cat, the name you distinguish her by, I am no less at a loss, as well knowing one's handsome cat is always the cat one likes best; or if one be alive and the other dead, it is usually the latter that is the handsomest.

Still had she gazed; but 'midst the tide[1]
Two angel[2] forms were seen to glide,
The Genii[2] of the stream;
Their scaly armor's Tyrian hue
Through richest purple[3] to the view
Betrayed a golden gleam.

The hapless nymph[4] with wonder saw;
A whisker first and then a claw,
With many an ardent wish,
She stretched in vain to reach the prize.
What female heart can gold despise?[5]
What Cat's averse to fish?[6]

Presumptuous maid! with looks intent[7]
Again she stretched, again she bent,
Nor knew the gulf between.
(Malignant Fate sat by, and smiled)
The slippery verge her feet beguiled,
She tumbled headlong in.

Besides, if the point were never so clear, I hope you do not think me so ill-bred or so imprudent as to forfeit all my interest in the survivor; oh, no! I would rather seem to mistake, and imagine to be sure it must be the tabby one that had met with this sad accident. Till this affair is a little better determined, you will excuse me if I do not begin to cry:

'Tempus inane peto, requiem spatiumque doloris.'"

The letter has a vein of pleasant, quiet humor oftener found in his prose, especially his letters, than in his poetry, which is generally of a serious nature.

[1] Note the word "tide" in the mock-heroic vein that characterizes the poem.

[2] Are the words "angel" and "Genii" consistent? Suggest another word for "angel."

[3] "Purple" explains "Tyrian" in line 16. What is the allusion?

[4] Note the word "nymph."

[5] What is the tone of the line? To what does "gold" allude?

[6] In the edition of 1748, "a foe to fish?"

[7] The edition of 1748 reads, "with eyes intent." Any reasons for the changes?

Eight times[1] emerging from the flood
She mewed to every wat'ry god
 Some speedy aid to send.
No Dolphin came, no Nereid stirred;[2]
Nor cruel Tom, nor Susan heard.
 A fav'rite has no friend!

From hence, ye Beauties, undeceived,
Know, one false step is ne'er retrieved,
 And be with caution bold.
Not all that tempts your wand'ring eyes
And heedless hearts is lawful prize;
 Nor all that glisters, gold.[3]

[1] What is the proverb alluded to? Point out the mock-heroic words used in this stanza.

[2] An allusion to the fable regarding the Greek poet Lesbos, who, being thrown into the sea by sailors, was carried safely to shore by dolphins enchanted with his lyre. Find allusion to same story in Milton's Lycidas.

[3] An old and favorite proverb. The modern word is "glitters." Cf. Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice, ii. vii.

ADVERTISEMENT.

"The author once had thoughts (in concert with a friend[1]) of giving the history of English Poetry. In the Introduction to it he meant to have produced some specimens of the style that reigned in ancient times among the neighboring nations, or those who had subdued the greater part of this island, and were our progenitors; the following three imitations made a part of them. He has long since dropped his design, especially after he heard that it was already in the hands of a person[2] well qualified to do it justice, both by his taste and his researches into antiquity" (GRAY, 1768).

PREFACE.

"In the eleventh century, Sigurd, earl of the Orkney Islands, went with a fleet of ships and a considerable body of troops into Ireland, to the assistance of Sictryg with the silken beard, who was then making war on his father-in-law, Brian, king of Dublin. The earl and all his forces were cut to pieces, and Sictryg was in danger of a total defeat; but the enemy had a greater loss by the death of Brian, their king, who fell in the action. On Christmas Day (the day of the battle) a native of Caithness in Scotland saw at a distance a number of persons on horseback, riding full speed toward a hill, and seeming to enter into it. Curiosity led him to follow them, till, looking through an opening in the rocks, he saw twelve gigantic figures resembling women. They were all employed about a loom; and as they wove, they sung the following dreadful song; which when they had finished, they tore the web into twelve pieces, and (each taking her portion) galloped six to the North, and as many to the South" (GRAY, 1768).

[1] William Mason (1724–1797), one of Gray's most intimate friends.

[2] Thomas Warton (1722–1800), the poet laureate. It is much to be regretted that Gray did not himself give up to the world something more in the romantic vein of this poem from his own extensive mine of antiquarian learning.

THE FATAL SISTERS.

AN ODE

(FROM THE NORSE TONGUE)

IN THE ORCADES OF THORMODUS TORFÆUS; HAFNIÆ, 1697, FOLIO; AND ALSO IN BARTHOLINUS.

Now the storm begins to lower,[1]
(Haste, the loom of Hell prepare,)[2]
Iron sleet of arrowy shower[3]
Hurtles[4] in the darkened air.

Glitt'ring lances are the loom,
Where the dusky[5] warp we strain,[6]

1 "The Valkyrie were female divinities, servants of Odin (or Woden), in the Gothic mythology. Their name signifies 'choosers of the slain.' They were mounted on swift horses, with drawn swords in their hands; and in the throng of battle selected such as were destined to slaughter, and conducted them to Vahalla, the hall of Odin, or paradise of the brave, where they attended the banquet, and served the departed heroes with horns of mead and ale" (GRAY).

2 Cf. The Bard, lines 49–52.

3 Cf. Milton's Paradise Regained, iii. 323, 324:

> "How quick they wheeled, and, flying, behind them shot
> Sharp sleet of arrowy showers against the face" (GRAY).

4 Cf. Julius Cæsar, ii. ii.: "The noise of battle hurtled in the air."

5 A rather mild epithet, used in a moral sense.

6 The warp is pulled taut, or strained, in the loom.

Weaving many a Soldier's doom,
Orkney's woe, and Randver's bane.

See the grisly [1] texture grow,
('Tis of human entrails made,)
And the weights that play below,[2]
Each a gasping warrior's head.

Shafts [3] for shuttles, dipped in gore,
Shoot the trembling cords along.
Sword,[4] that once a monarch bore,
Keep the tissue close and strong.

Mista,[5] black, terrific maid,
Sangrida,[5] and Hilda,[5] see,
Join the wayward work [6] to aid;
'Tis the woof of victory.

Ere the ruddy sun be set,
Pikes must shiver, javelins sing,[7]
Blade with clattering buckler meet,
Hauberk crash, and helmet ring.

(Weave the crimson web of war)[8]
Let us go, and let us fly,
Where our friends the conflict share,
Where they triumph, where they die.

1 Horrid. Cf. The Bard, line 44.

2 This line carries on the metaphor of the loom.

3 Spears.

4 The metaphor seems strained.

5 "Mista" means black; "Sangrida," terrific. "The names of the sisters, in the original, are Hilda, Hiorthrimol, Sangrida, and Swipol" (Gosse).

6 Note the alliteration. Would "wicked" answer here for "wayward"?

7 What is the singing of a javelin?

8 Cf. The Bard, line 49: "Weave the warp, and weave the woof."

As the paths of fate we tread,
Wading through th' ensanguined field;
Gondula, and Geira, spread
O'er the youthful King your shield.

We the reins to slaughter give,
Ours to kill, and ours to spare;
Spite of danger he shall live,
(Weave the crimson web of war.)

They whom once the desert beach[1]
Pent within its bleak domain,
Soon their ample sway shall stretch[2]
O'er the plenty of the plain.

Low the dauntless Earl is laid,
Gored with many a gaping wound;
Fate demands a nobler head;
Soon a King shall bite the ground.

Long his loss shall Eirin weep,
Ne'er again his likeness see;
Long her strains in sorrow steep,
Strains of immortality![3]

Horror covers all the heath,
Clouds of carnage[4] blot the sun.
Sisters, weave the web of death;
Sisters, cease, the work is done.

Hail the task, and hail the hands!
Songs of joy and triumph sing
Joy to the victorious bands;
Triumph to the younger King.

[1] "Beach," i.e., the edge or boundary separating the desert from the fertile plain. [2] Note the rime of "stretch" with "beach."

[3] Songs that will make his memory immortal.

[4] "Clouds of carnage." Note the vigor of expression.

Mortal,[1] thou that hear'st the tale,
Learn the tenor of our song.
Scotland, through each winding vale
Far and wide the notes prolong.

Sisters, hence with spurs of speed;
Each her thundering falchion wield,
Each bestride her sable steed.
Hurry, hurry to the field.

[1] The fatal sisters were *immortal*.

ODE ON THE SPRING.[1]

Lo! where the rosy-bosomed Hours,[2]
Fair Venus' train,[3] appear,
Disclose the long expecting flowers,
And wake the purple[4] year!
The Attic warbler[5] pours her throat,[6]
Responsive to the cuckoo's note,
The untaught harmony of spring;
While, whispering pleasure as they fly,
Cool Zephyrs through the clear blue sky
Their gathered fragrance fling.[7]

Where'er the oak's thick branches stretch
A broader browner shade,
Where'er the rude and moss-grown beech

[1] The original title of this ode was Noontide: An Ode. It was written in 1742, and published some years later in the Dodsley collection, under the simple title of Ode.

[2] The Horæ, or "Hours," in mythology, were goddesses presiding over the course of the seasons, who caused all things to blossom and ripen at the proper time. They were represented as adorned with flowers and fruits.

[3] The Horæ were often associated with other divinities, as Venus, Apollo, etc.

[4] "Purple" in poetry very often signifies "magnificent."

[5] "Attic warbler," the nightingale. There is a legend that Philomela, daughter of an Attic king, was changed into a nightingale. (This word is properly "nightigale," the *n* being intrusive. Give some other examples of the intrusive *n*.)

[6] "Pours her throat." What is the figure?

[7] Note the alliteration.

O'ercanopies the glade,[1]
Beside some water's rushy brink
With me the Muse shall sit, and think
(At ease reclined in rustic state)
How vain the ardor of the crowd,
How low, how little are the proud,
How indigent the great!

Still is the toiling hand of Care;
The panting herds repose;
Yet hark, how through the peopled air[2]
The busy murmur glows![3]
The insect youth are on the wing,
Eager to taste the honeyed spring,
And float amid the liquid noon;[4]
Some lightly o'er the current skim,
Some show their gaily-gilded trim[5]
Quick-glancing to the sun.[6]

To Contemplation's sober eye[7]
Such is the race of Man;

[1] Cf. Midsummer-Night's Dream, ii. ii.:

"A bank . . .
Quite overcanopied with luscious woodbine" (GRAY).

[2] "Peopled air," i.e., air alive with insect life. Pope has "peopled grass."

[3] Cf. Wordsworth's The Excursion, Book I.:

". . . This multitude of flies
Is filling all the air with melody."

[4] Cf. Vergil's Georgics, IV. 59: "Nare per æstatem liquidam" (GRAY).

[5] Cf. Milton's Comus, line 299.

[6] Cf. Milton's Paradise Lost, vii. lines 405, 406:

". . . sporting with quick glance,
Show to the sun their waved coats dropped with gold" (GRAY).

[7] Cf. Green's The Grotto, Dodsley's Miscellanies, v. 161: "While insects from the threshold preach" (GRAY).

In a letter to Walpole, Gray acknowledges that the thought on which this

And they that creep, and they that fly,
Shall end where they began.
Alike the Busy and the Gay
But flutter through life's little day,
In fortune's varying colors dressed;
Brushed by the hand of rough Mischance,
Or chilled by age, their airy dance
They leave, in dust to rest.

Methinks I hear in accents low
The sportive kind[1] reply:
Poor moralist! and what art thou?
A solitary fly!
Thy joys no glittering female meets,
No hive hast thou of hoarded sweets,
No painted plumage to display;[2]
On hasty wings thy youth is flown;
Thy sun is set, thy spring is gone—
We frolic, while 'tis May.[3]

ode turns "is manifestly stole" from Green's The Grotto. The acknowledgment is made "that I may do justice." It seems, however, to have been a case of "unconscious plagiarism."

[1] The gay and thoughtless. See line 35.

[2] Note the metaphor in lines 46, 47, and point out the similitude.

[3] The springtime of life.

HYMN TO ADVERSITY.[1]

DAUGHTER of Jove,[2] relentless Power,
Thou Tamer of the human breast,
Whose iron scourge and torturing hour
The bad affright, afflict the best![3]
Bound in thy adamantine chain[4]
The proud are taught to taste of pain,
And purple tyrants[5] vainly groan
With pangs unfelt before, unpitied and alone.

When first thy Sire to send on earth
Virtue, his darling child, designed,
To thee he gave the heavenly birth,[6]
And bade to form her infant mind.[7]

[1] The first edition of this poem was preceded by a motto from the Greek of Æschylus, which describes affliction as being sent by Jove for the ultimate good of man.

[2] Ate, originally goddess of infatuation or reckless crime. Later she was regarded as the avenger of unrighteousness; but there seems to be no authority for considering her the goddess of adversity.

[3] The "scourge" affrights; the "hour" afflicts.

[4] Cf. Milton's Paradise Lost, i. 48: "In adamantine chains and penal fire."

[5] "Purple tyrants." Purple is the regal color. Perhaps it suggests "bloody."

[6] Virtue.

[7] The idea in lines 9–12 is a favorite with moralists. Cf. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Heb. xii. 6).

Stern rugged Nurse! thy rigid lore
With patience many a year she bore;
What sorrow was, thou hadst her know,
And from her own she learned to melt at others' woe.

Scared at thy frown terrific, fly
Self-pleasing Folly's idle brood,[1]
Wild Laughter, Noise, and thoughtless Joy,
And leave us leisure to be good.[2]
Light they disperse, and with them go
The summer friend, the flattering foe;[3]
By vain Prosperity[4] received,
To her they[5] vow their truth, and are again believed.

Wisdom in sable garb[6] arrayed,
Immersed in rapturous thought profound,
And Melancholy, silent maid[7]
With leaden eye, that loves the ground,
Still on thy solemn steps attend;
Warm Charity, the general friend,
With justice to herself severe,
And Pity, dropping soft the sadly pleasing tear.[8]

1 Cf. Milton's Il Penseroso, lines 1, 2:

"Hence, vain, deluding joys,
The brood of Folly, without father bred!"

2 Is sloth conducive to virtue?

3 What is the idea? Note the alliteration. Cf. The Bard, lines 69, 70.

4 "Vain Prosperity." Bacon says: "Prosperity doth best discover vice" (Essay on Adversity).

5 What is the antecedent of "they"?

6 Gray has also "the sable garb of woe." (Cf. The Bard, line 17.) Point out the distinction in meaning.

7 Cf. Collins's Ode to the Passions, lines 56, 57:

"With eyes *upraised*, as one inspired,
Pale Melancholy sat retired."

Also Milton's Il Penseroso, line 43: "With a sad, leaden, downward cast."

8 Cf. The Bard, line 129: "Pale Grief, and *pleasing Pain*." Also The Progress of Poesy, line 94, "sympathetic Tears."

Oh, gently on thy suppliant's head,
Dread Goddess, lay thy chastening hand!
Not in thy Gorgon terrors[1] clad,
Not circled with the vengeful band
(As by the impious thou art seen),
With thundering voice, and threat'ning mien,
With screaming Horror's funeral cry,
Despair, and fell Disease, and ghastly Poverty.

Thy form benign, O Goddess,[2] wear,
Thy milder influence impart,
Thy philosophic train be there
To soften, not to wound my heart,[3]
The generous spark extinct revive,
Teach me to love and to forgive,
Exact[4] my own defects to scan,
What others are,[5] to feel, and know myself a Man.

[1] Cf. Milton's Paradise Lost, ii. 611: "Medusa with Gorgonian terror." Also Comus, line 447: "Snaky-headed Gorgon shield."

[2] "Goddess," Ate. See line 1.

[3] "Thy milder influence," etc. As "the mind is its own place" (Paradise Lost, I. line 254), one may make the "uses of adversity sweet."

[4] Compel me.

[5] What is the grammatical relation of the clause, "What others are"?

ODE ON THE PLEASURE ARISING FROM VICISSITUDE.[1]

A FRAGMENT.

Now the golden Morn aloft
 Waves her dew-bespangled wing,
With vermeil cheek and whisper soft
 She wooes the tardy spring;[2]
Till April starts, and calls around
The sleeping fragrance from the ground;
And lightly o'er the living scene
Scatters his freshest, tenderest green.

Newborn flocks, in rustic dance,
 Frisking ply their feeble feet;
Forgetful of their wintry trance,
 The birds his[3] presence greet;

[1] A posthumous poem, written by Gray probably in 1754, but left unfinished. "I have heard Gray say that Gresset's Épître à ma Sœur gave him the first idea of this ode, and whoever compares it with the French poem will find some slight traits of resemblance" (MASON).

[2] Are the metaphors in lines 1–4 mixed?

[3] What is the antecedent of "his"?

But chief, the Skylark warbles high
His trembling thrilling ecstasy,
And, lessening from the dazzled sight,
Melts into air and liquid light.

Rise, my soul! on wings of fire,[1]
Rise the rapturous choir among;
Hark! 'tis Nature strikes the lyre,[2]
And leads the general song:

* * * * *

Yesterday the sullen[3] year
Saw the snowy whirlwind fly;
Mute was the music of the air,[4]
The Herd stood drooping by;
Their raptures now that worldly flow,[5]
No yesterday, nor morrow know;
'Tis man alone that Joy descries[6]
With forward and reverted eyes.[7]

Smiles on past Misfortune's brow
Soft Reflection's hand can trace;
And o'er the cheek of Sorrow throw
A melancholy grace;
While Hope prolongs our happier hour,
Or deepest shades, that dimly lower
And blacken round our weary way,
Gilds with a gleam of distant day.[8]

[1] "Wings of fire," a very extravagant metaphor.
[2] What is Nature's lyre? [3] Gloomy; dismal.
[4] Note the alliteration. [5] An obscure line. [6] Shows; reveals.
[7] Looking forward to the future, and backward on the past.
[8] Lines 33–36. Cf. Pope's Essay on Man, I. lines 95, 96:

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast:
Man never *is*, but always to be blest."

Also Essay on Man, II. lines 283, 284:

"Meanwhile opinion gilds with varying rays
Those painted clouds that beautify our days."

Still, where rosy Pleasure leads,
 See a kindred Grief pursue;
Behind the steps that Misery treads,
 Approaching Comfort view;
The hues of Bliss more brightly glow,
Chastised by sabler tints of woe;
And blended form, with artful strife,
The strength and harmony of Life.[1]

See the Wretch, that long has tossed
 On the thorny bed of Pain,
At length repair his vigor lost,
 And breathe and walk again;—
The meanest flow'ret of the vale,
The simplest note that swells the gale,
The common sun, the air, the skies,
To him are opening Paradise.[2]

Humble Quiet builds her cell
 Near the source whence Pleasure flows;
She eyes the clear crystalline well,
 And tastes it as it goes.[3]

* * * * *

[1] Lines 43, 44. Cf. Pope's Essay on Man, II. lines 121, 122:

"The lights and shades whose well-accorded strife
Gives all the strength and color of our life."

[2] Lines 48–52. Wordsworth, in his Ode on Intimations of Immortality, says:

"To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

[3] The remainder of the poem is fragmentary.

THE DESCENT OF ODIN.[1]

Up rose the King of Men with speed,
And saddled straight his coal-black steed;
Down the yawning steep he rode,
That leads to Hela's drear abode.[2]
Him the Dog of Darkness spied,
His shaggy throat he opened wide,
While from his jaws, with carnage filled,
Foam and human gore distilled;
Hoarse he bays with hideous din,
Eyes that glow, and fangs that grin;
And long pursues, with fruitless yell,
The father of the powerful spell.
Onward still his way he takes,
(The groaning earth beneath him shakes,)
Till full before his fearless eyes
The portals nine of hell[3] arise.

[1] "The Descent of Odin, written at Cambridge in 1761, first appeared in the volume of 1768. It is a paraphrase of the ancient Icelandic lay called Vegtams Kvida, and sometimes Baldrs Draumar. The best edition of the original is that given in the Corpus Poeticum Boreale, vol. i., p. 181, under the heading Balder's Doom" (Gosse).

[2] "Niflheimr the hell of the Gothic nations, consisted of nine worlds, to which were devoted all such as died of sickness, old age, or by any other means than in battle. Over it presided Hela, the goddess of death" (Gray).

[3] "Portals nine of hell." Cf. Milton's Paradise Lost, II. lines 645, 646:

"... three folds were brass,
Three iron, three of adamantine rock."

Right against the eastern gate,
By the moss-grown pile he sate;
Where long of yore to sleep was laid
The dust of the prophetic Maid.[1]
Facing to the northern clime,
Thrice he traced the runic rime;
Thrice pronounced, in accents dread,
The thrilling verse[2] that wakes the dead:
Till from out the hollow ground
Slowly breathed a sullen sound.

Pr. What call unknown, what charms presume
To break the quiet of the tomb?
Who thus afflicts my troubled sprite,[3]
And drags me from the realms of night?[4]
Long on these mold'ring bones have beat
The winter's snow, the summer's heat,
The drenching dews, and driving rain![5]
Let me, let me sleep again.
Who is he, with voice unblessed,
That calls me from the bed of rest?

O. A Traveler, to thee unknown,
Is he that calls, a Warrior's son.
Thou the deeds of light[6] shalt know;
Tell me what is done below,[7]
For whom yon glitt'ring board is spread,
Dressed for whom yon golden bed.

1 "Prophetic Maid," i.e., Hela.

2 "The original word is *valgalldr;* from *valr,* 'mortuus,' and *galldr,* 'incantatio'" (GRAY, MS.).

3 "Sprite," i.e., spirit.

4 A prophet properly dwells in the realm of darkness.

5 Lines 30–33 show the Norse idea of hell, which was very materialistic.

6 "Deeds of light," i.e., things done in the upper world.

7 "Odin, we find, both from this ode and the Edda, was solicitous about the fate of his son Balder, who had dreamed he was soon to die. The Edda mentions the manner of his death when killed by Odin's other son Hoder, and

Pr. Mantling in the goblet see
The pure bev'rage of the bee,
O'er it hangs the shield of gold;
'Tis the drink of Balder bold;
Balder's head to death is giv'n.
Pain can reach the sons of Heav'n!
Unwilling I my lips unclose:
Leave me, leave me to repose.

O. Once again my call obey;
Prophetess, arise, and say,
What dangers Odin's child await,
Who the Author of his fate.

Pr. In Hoder's hand the Hero's doom:
His brother sends him to the tomb.
Now my weary lips I close;
Leave me, leave me to repose.

O. Prophetess, my spell obey;
Once again arise, and say,
Who th' Avenger of his guilt,
By whom shall Hoder's blood be spilled?

Pr. In the caverns of the west,
By Odin's fierce embrace compressed,
A wond'rous Boy shall Rinda bear,
Who ne'er shall comb his raven hair,
Nor wash his visage in the stream,
Nor see the sun's departing beam,
Till he on Hoder's corse shall smile
Flaming on the fun'ral pile.

also that Hoder was himself slain by Vali, the son of Odin and Rinda, consonant with this prophecy" (MASON). (See Matthew Arnold's Balder Dead.) What event in nature does this myth typify?

Now my weary lips I close;
Leave me, leave me to repose.

O. Yet awhile my call obey;
Prophetess, awake, and say,
What Virgins these, in speechless woe,
That bend to earth their solemn brow,
That their flaxen tresses tear,
And snowy veils, that float in air.
Tell me, whence their sorrows rose;
Then I leave thee to repose.

Pr. Ha! no Traveler art thou,
King of Men, I know thee now;
Mightiest of a mighty line—

O. No boding Maid of skill divine
Art thou, nor Prophetess of good;
But Mother of the giant brood!

Pr. Hie thee hence, and boast at home,
That never shall Inquirer come
To break my iron sleep again;
Till Lok[1] has burst his tenfold chain;
Never, till substantial Night
Has reassumed her ancient right;
Till wrapped in flames, in ruin hurled,
Sinks the fabric of the world.

[1] "Lok is the evil Being who continues in chains till the Twilight of the Gods approaches. When he shall break his bonds, the human race, the stars and sun shall disappear, the earth sink in the seas, and fire consume the skies. Even Odin himself and his kindred deities shall perish. For a further explanation of this mythology, see Mallet's Introduction to the History of Denmark, 1755, quarto" (GRAY).

COMMENTARY ON "THE ALLIANCE OF EDUCATION AND GOVERNMENT."

This poem will be made clearer to the student by the following commentary taken from William Mason's edition of the works of Gray:

"The author's subject being (as we have seen) *The necessary Alliance between a good Form of Government and a good Mode of Education, in order to produce the Happiness of Mankind,* the poem opens with two similes; an uncommon kind of exordium; but which, I suppose, the poet intentionally chose, to intimate the analogical method he meant to pursue in his subsequent reasonings. First, he asserts that men without education are like sickly plants in a cold or barren soil (lines 1 to 4, and 9 to 12); and, secondly, he compares them, when unblessed with a just and well-regulated government, to plants that will not blossom or bear fruit in an unkindly and inclement air (lines 5 to 8, and 13 to 21). Having thus laid down the two propositions he means to prove, he begins by examining into the characteristics which (taking a general view of mankind) all men have in common one with another (lines 22 to 37): they covet pleasure and avoid pain (line 31); they feel gratitude for benefits (line 34); they desire to avenge wrongs, which they effect either by force or cunning (line 35); they are linked to each other by their common feelings, and participate in sorrow and in joy (lines 36, 37). If, then, all the human species agree in so many moral particulars, whence arises the diversity of national characters? This question the poet puts at line 38, and dilates upon it to line 63. Why, says he, have some nations shown a propensity to commerce and industry; others to war and rapine; others to ease and pleasure (lines 40 to 45)? Why have the Northern people overspread in all ages, and prevailed over the Southern (lines 46 to 57)? Why has Asia been, time out of mind, the seat of despotism, and Europe that of freedom (lines 58 to 63)? Are we from these instances to imagine men necessarily enslaved to the inconveniences of the climate where they were born (lines 64 to 71)? Or are we not rather to suppose there is a natural strength in the human mind that is able to vanquish and break through them (lines 72 to 83)? It is confessed, however, that men receive an early tincture from the situation they are placed in and the climate which produces them (lines 84 to 87). Thus the inhabitants of the mountains, inured to labor and patience, are naturally trained to war (lines 88 to 95); while those of the plain are more open to any attack, and softened by ease and plenty (lines 96 to 99). Again, the Egyptians, from the nature of their situation, might be the inventors of home navigation, from a necessity of keeping up an intercourse between their towns during the inundation of the Nile (lines 100 et seq.)."

THE ALLIANCE OF EDUCATION AND GOVERNMENT.

A FRAGMENT.[1]

As sickly plants betray a niggard earth,
Whose barren[2] bosom starves her generous birth,
Nor genial warmth, nor genial juice retains
Their roots to feed, and fill their verdant veins;
And as in climes, where Winter holds his reign,
The soil, though fertile, will not teem in vain,
Forbids her gems[3] to swell, her shades[4] to rise,
Nor trusts her blossoms to the churlish skies.

[1] A posthumous poem. "This poem was written in August, 1748, at Cambridge. While it was being composed, Montesquieu's L'Esprit des Lois fell into Gray's hands, and his own treatment of the theme became distasteful to him. Some years later he thought of taking it up again, and was about to compose a prefatory ode to M. de Montesquieu, when that writer died, on the 10th of February, 1755, and the whole thing was abandoned" (GOSSE).

"Instead of compiling tables of chronology and natural history, why did not Mr. Gray apply the powers of his genius to finish the philosophic poem of which he has left such an exquisite specimen?" (GIBBON.)

[2] Gray first wrote "flinty" bosom, but changed it to "barren."

[3] Buds. [4] Trees.

So draw mankind in vain the vital airs,
Unformed, unfriended, by those kindly cares,[1]
That health and vigor to the soul impart,
Spread the young thought, and warm the opening heart.[2]
So fond[3] Instruction on the growing powers
Of Nature idly lavishes her stores,
If equal Justice with unclouded face[4]
Smile not indulgent on the rising race,
And scatter with a free, though frugal, hand
Light golden showers of plenty o'er the land.
But Tyranny has[5] fixed her empire there,
To check their tender hopes with chilling fear,
And blast the blooming[6] promise of the year.
 This spacious animated scene survey
From where the rolling orb,[7] that gives the day,
His sable sons[8] with nearer course surrounds
To either pole, and life's remotest bounds,
How rude soe'er th' exterior form we find,
Howe'er Opinion tinge the varied mind,
Alike to all the kind[9] impartial Heav'n
The sparks of truth and happiness has given.
With sense to feel, with mem'ry to retain,
They follow pleasure, and they fly from pain;
Their judgment mends the plan their fancy draws,
Th' event presages, and explores the cause.

1 Note the inversion.
2 Note that the poem opens with *two* similes.
3 Vain; foolish.
4 "Unclouded face." Cf. "churlish skies," line 8.
5 Gray first wrote this:

"But gloomy Sway have fixed her empire there."

6 The first writing read "vernal" promise.
7 "The rolling orb," i.e., the sun (poetic license).
8 "Sable sons," i.e., the planets, which shine not of their own light.
9 "Kind" is a substantive.

The soft returns of gratitude they know,
By fraud elude, by force repel the foe,
While mutual[1] wishes, mutual woes endear
The social smile, the sympathetic tear.
Say then, through ages by what fate confined
To different climes seem different souls assigned?[2]
Here measured laws and philosophic ease[3]
Fix and improve the polished arts of peace:
There Industry and Gain their vigils keep,
Command the winds, and tame th' unwilling deep.
Here Force and hardy deeds of blood prevail:
There languid Pleasure sighs in every gale.[4]
Oft o'er the trembling nations from afar
Has Scythia[5] breathed the living cloud of war;[6]
And where the deluge burst, with sweepy sway
Their arms, their kings, their gods were rolled away.
As oft have issued, host impelling host,
The blue-eyed myriads from the Baltic coast.
The prostrate South to the destroyer yields
Her boasted titles and her golden fields;
With grim delight the brood of Winter[7] view
A brighter day, and heavens[8] of azure hue;
Scent[9] the new[10] fragrance of the breathing[11] rose,
And quaff the pendent vintage[12] as it grows.

1 "Mutual" is here misused as meaning "common."

2 The line suggests that men, as to their manners, morals, temperaments, etc., are subject to climatic influences.

3 "Philosophic ease." Cf. Pope's Essay on Man, II. line 188.

4 Note the antitheses in lines 40–45.

5 "Scythia," the indefinite area lying north of the Baltic Sea and probably extending into Asia. The Scythians were Aryans, with a Mongol admixture.

6 "Living cloud of war," an expressive metaphor. "Living," i.e., moving.

7 "Brood of Winter," i.e., tribes from the wintry North.

8 First writing read "skies."

9 First writing read "Catch."

10 "New" to them.

11 "Breathing," i.e., exhaling fragrance.

12 "Pendent vintage," i.e., grapes.

Proud of the yoke, and pliant to the rod,
Why yet does Asia dread a monarch's nod,
While European freedom still withstands
Th' encroaching tide,[1] that drowns her lessening lands,[2]
And sees far off with an indignant groan,
Her native plains, and empires once her own?
Can opener skies, and suns of fiercer flame,[3]
O'erpower the fire that animates our frame;
As lamps, that shed at eve a cheerful ray,
Fade and expire beneath the eye of day?[4]
Need we the influence of the northern star[5]
To string our nerves and steel our hearts to war?
And, where the face of nature laughs[6] around,
Must sick'ning virtue[7] fly the tainted[8] ground?
Unmanly thought! what seasons[9] can control,
What fancied zone[10] can circumscribe the soul,
Who, conscious of the source from whence she springs,
By Reason's light on Resolution's wings,[11]
Spite of her frail companion[12] dauntless goes
O'er Libya's[13] deserts and through Zembla's[14] snows?
She bids each slumb'ring energy awake,
Another touch, another temper take,

1 "Encroaching tide" of despotism.
2 "Lessening lands," i.e., narrowing extent of territory.
"Suns of fiercer flame," i.e., tropical heat.
4 "Eye of day," i.e., the sun.
5 "Northern star," rigorous climate of the north.
6 "Where the face of nature laughs," i.e., where the climate is genial.
7 "Virtue," valor.
8 "Tainted" with cowardice.
9 Climatic conditions.
10 Temperature; literally, a *belt* of the earth.
11 Note the force and beauty of the metaphors in line 75.
12 "Frail companion," i.e., the weak body.
13 "Libya," i.e., Africa.
14 "Zembla," i.e., Nova Zembla, a double island in the Arctic Ocean, north of Russia.

Suspends th' inferior laws[1] that rule our clay:[2]
The stubborn elements[3] confess her sway,
Their little wants, their low desires refine,
And raise the mortal to a height divine.
Not but the human fabric from the birth
Imbibes a flavor of its parent earth,
As various tracts enforce a various toil,
The manners speak the idiom of their soil.
An iron-race[4] the mountain cliffs maintain,
Foes to the gentler genius of the plain;
For where unwearied sinews must be found
With sidelong plow to quell the flinty ground,
To turn the torrent's swift-descending flood,
To brave the savage, rushing from the wood,
What wonder, if to patient valor trained
They guard with spirit what by strength they gained?
And while their rocky ramparts round they see,
The rough abode of want and liberty
(As lawless force from confidence will grow),
Insult the plenty of the vales below?
What wonder in the sultry climes, that spread
Where Nile redundant[5] o'er his summer bed
From his broad bosom life and verdure flings
And broods o'er Egypt with his wat'ry wings,
If with advent'rous oar and ready sail
The dusky people drive before the gale;
Or on frail floats to distant cities ride,
That rise and glitter o'er the ambient tide?[6]

* * * * *

1 "Inferior laws," i.e., the lower or baser passions.

2 "Clay," i.e., the body.

3 "Stubborn elements." See Note 1.

4 "An iron-race." Mountaineers, compelled by necessity to patient labor, are naturally trained to war.

5 "Nile redundant" alludes to the spring floods of that river.

6 Note that line 107 ends with the sentence or thought incomplete.

STANZAS TO MR. RICHARD BENTLEY.[1]

In silent gaze the tuneful choir among,
 Half pleased, half blushing, let the Muse admire,
While Bentley leads her sister art along,
 And bids the pencil answer to the lyre.

See, in their course, each transitory thought
 Fixed by his touch a lasting essence take;[2]
Each dream, in fancy's airy coloring wrought,
 To local symmetry and life awake!

The tardy rimes that used to linger on,
 To censure cold, and negligent of fame,
In swifter measures animated run,
 And catch a luster from his genuine flame.[3]

Ah! could they[4] catch his strength, his easy grace,
 His quick creation,[5] his unerring line;

[1] A posthumous poem. "These lines were written in 1752 as a compliment to Bentley for drawing the designs for the Six Poems of 1753. Unfortunately the sole existing MS. had the corner of the last stanza torn off when Mason found it" (Gosse).

[2] Note the delicate compliment in this line and the two following.

[3] "Genuine flame," i.e., true inspiration, the "divine afflatus."

[4] "They," i.e., his "tardy rimes." See line 9.

[5] "Quick creation," i.e., lively fancy.

The energy of Pope they might efface,
 And Dryden's harmony submit to mine.[1]

But not to one in this benighted age
 Is that diviner inspiration giv'n,
That burns in Shakespeare's or in Milton's page,
 The pomp and prodigality of heav'n.[2]

As when conspiring in the diamond's blaze,[3]
 The meaner gems,[4] that singly charm the sight,
Together dart their intermingled rays,
 And dazzle with a luxury of light.

* * * * *

1 In Gray's estimation, there could have been no greater poetic glory.
2 Note the strength of this line.
3 "The diamond's blaze" implied simile or similes.
4 "The meaner gems." Explain the metaphor.

SONNET

ON THE DEATH OF RICHARD WEST.[1]

In vain to me the smiling[2] Mornings shine,
And reddening[3] Phœbus lifts his golden fire:
The birds in vain their amorous descant join;
Or cheerful fields resume their green attire:
These ears, alas! for other notes repine,[4]
A different object do these eyes require:
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine;[4]
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire.
Yet Morning smiles[5] the busy race to cheer,

[1] A posthumous poem. "The MS. of this sonnet exists at Pembroke College. At the close Gray has written: 'At Stoke, August, 1742'" (Gosse).

Richard West was a son of that Richard West who was lord chancellor of Ireland, and a grandson of the famous Bishop Gilbert Burnet. He was one of the "quadruple alliance" of which the others were Gray, Walpole, and Thomas Ashton. Their friendship was very close. West had "a first row in the front box of my [Gray's] heart." He (West) was a poet of merit. His Ode to May has in it passages that would not discredit the later style of Gray himself. He died June 1, 1742, in his twenty-sixth year.

[2] What sort of an epithet?

[3] Why the progressive form?

[4] "Join" frequently rimes with words terminating in *ine*. It seems that the word was often pronounced *jine*.

[5] "Morning smiles." See line 1.

And newborn pleasure brings to happier men:
The fields to all their wonted tribute bear;
To warm their little loves the birds complain:
I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,
And weep the more because I weep in vain.[1]

[1] A Stoic said to one who mourned for his dead son: "Why do you weep? You cannot bring him back." "'Tis for that cause," said the father, "that I weep."

SKETCH OF HIS OWN CHARACTER,

WRITTEN IN 1761, AND FOUND IN ONE OF HIS POCKETBOOKS.

Too poor for a bribe, and too proud to importune,
He had not the method of making a fortune;
Could love, and could hate, so was thought somewhat odd;
No very great wit, he believed in a God;
A place [1] or a pension he did not desire,
But left church and state to Charles Townshend [2] and Squire.[3]

[1] It will be remembered that Gray refused the "place" of poet laureate.

[2] Right Honorable Charles Townshend (1725–1767), English orator and statesman.

[3] "At that time fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, and afterwards bishop of St. David's. Dr. Squire died in 1766. Bishop Warburton one day met Dean Tucker, who said that he hoped his lordship liked his situation at Gloucester; on which the sarcastic bishop replied that never bishopric was so bedeaned, for that his predecessor Dr. Squire had made religion his trade, and that he (Dr. Tucker) had made trade his religion" (MITFORD).

ECLECTIC ENGLISH CLASSICS

GOLDSMITH'S

DESERTED VILLAGE

EDITED BY

A. M. VAN DYKE, M. A.

FORMERLY DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, CINCINNATI HIGH SCHOOLS

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Deserted Village

INTRODUCTION.

By accident of birthplace Goldsmith was an Irishman. His parents were of English descent. At the time of the poet's birth, his father Charles Goldsmith was a clergyman of the English Church in the poor little village of Pallas, or Pallasmore, in the County of Longford, Ireland. In this village the poet was born on the 10th day of November, 1728. A few years after the poet's birth the Rev. Mr. Goldsmith removed to Lissoy into a more lucrative living than "forty pounds a year." The earliest recollections of the poet seem to have been of Lissoy, and it is a generally accepted fact that "Sweet Auburn" of "The Deserted Village" of which Goldsmith writes so lovingly, is the Lissoy of his boyhood.

To Goldsmith's mind when he wrote "The Deserted Village," Lissoy was ideally beautiful, and to the care-free and happy days when he and comrades "roamed the daisied fields together," his mind ever reverted with peculiar delight, or with pathetic tenderness. He forgets the crop failures, and remembers the smile of the waving grain. If the cow or the pig invaded the inn, he does not record the fact, but sees only its "whitewashed wall, and nicely sanded floor;" if there were sometimes bloody noses and broken heads there is no mention made of it, but he tells us with quaint humor that "village statesmen talked with looks profound;" if there were squalid and hungry children he does not tell us so, but he—

> "blessed the coming day,
> When toil remitting lent its turn to play;
> And all the village train, from labor free,
> Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree."

If a good man did not spoil his child, but now and then gave a certain godless son a severe thrashing, he does not whine about it, but speaks of him as a "man to all the country dear" whose "failings leaned to virtue's side."[1] If Auburn be a picture of an actual Kentish village, it is Goldsmith's ideal of what was once the village of Lissoy.

Shortly after the removal of the Rev. Mr. Goldsmith from Pallas to Lissoy, Oliver was sent to a village school kept by a Mrs. Elizabeth Delap. She reports him to have been inordinately dull. Most children with active imaginations and creative fancies are generally considered hopeless cases. At the age of six he was transferred to the school of Thomas—commonly known and spoken of as Paddy—Byrne. We have a pleasing portrait of him in lines 197–216 of "The Deserted Village." It is possible, or perhaps even probable that Byrne was more influential in shaping the future of Goldsmith than any one of the poet's family. He was romantic, superstitious, and believed, or professed to believe, all the fairy tales and folklore of Ireland.

This early influence was not favorable to the acquisition of useful, or rather, practical knowledge. "Innocently to amuse the imagination in this dream of life, is wisdom." Goldsmith had no love for the coldly intellectual and had a fervent dislike for mathematics. So little was his inclination toward this sort of mental effort that he was considered by schoolmates and preceptors a "stupid, heavy blockhead." An attack of confluent smallpox took him from under the influence of Byrne. The attack was near proving fatal, and so pitted did it leave his face that he is said to have been repulsively ugly.

In his ninth year he was transferred to a school of higher order, that he might be fitted for college. First he went to Athlone under the care of the Rev. Mr. Campbell; then, after

[1] Those who are familiar with Chaucer's *Prologue* will find several passages in that poet's characterization of the "Povre Persoun of a Toun," which are closely parallel to some in Goldsmith's description of the Village Preacher.

two years, to one at Edgeworthstown under the control of the Rev. Patrick Hughes. At these schools, though not a brilliant pupil, he seems to have been a fairly acceptable one, and was popular with his schoolmates. His favorite studies were of the Latin poets and historians.

Yet he was essentially and always shy, awkward and sensitive; the butt of the brutal wit of stolid fools. He always knew what repartee to make, but knew it too late, so that, not only in his schoolboy days, but in after life in society, his want of quickness made him appear sometimes a fool: but in the quiet of his study he was "master of the situation: nothing could be more incisive, polished and easy than his playful sarcasm."

The following is the famous epitaph by the actor, David Garrick, on the *late* Dr. Goldsmith (he was always late to Club meetings)—

> "Here lies poet Goldsmith, for shortness called Noll,
> Who wrote like an angel but talked like poor poll."

It may be that this "poll parrot" talk was, in many instances at least, of such refined and delicate humor, that the more robust wit of Garrick, and others too, did not appreciate or understand. There can be no doubt that his reputation has suffered from dull-pated fools, wise in their own conceit; and unable to understand and appreciate his delicate humor.

When he was seventeen years old he went up to Trinity College, Dublin, which he entered as a sizar. To one of his timid and sensitive nature, the humiliations attending such a position were all but unbearable. Had he been more of an optimist he could have endured the humiliations for the sake of the advantage of college training.

In due course he took his degree and returned home, perhaps neither a wiser nor a better man for his college experience. At home he found everything changed. His father had died: his mother was left with a mere pittance and could do nothing for him. He had lost the confidence of his kinsfolk generally.

The only one whose confidence and faith in him remained was his uncle, the Rev. Mr. Contarine. His father had always wished him to take holy orders. Although the clerical profession was distasteful to him yet out of filial piety, and because urged by his uncle Contarine, supported by the urgent approval of his family connections he consented to apply for investiture. He was rejected by the Bishop, but whether because of his want of preparation, mental and moral, or on account of the scarlet breeches that he wore when he appeared for examination and ordination, cannot be determined. It is very certain that he would not have been an ornament to the profession, and it would be regretful to have spoiled a charming poet in the making of a poor preacher.

Having failed to succeed to holy orders, it was necessary for him to look about for a source of maintenance. He was twenty-one years old. He could not with any self-respect depend upon friends and kinsmen for material help, unless he showed more evident signs of steadiness of character and firmness of purpose to do something worth doing.

One thing after another was tried and no success came. Having thirty guineas in his pocket he set out to see the world and took passage for America; but the ship sailed without him and he returned to his mother's house "lean, rent and beggared," with a plausible excuse of course. Then a council of his friends determined that he should study law, and he set out for London with fifty pounds in his pocket to enter upon his studies at the Temple. But the sharpers discovered the greenhorn, lured him into a gambling house, and fleeced him of every penny before he could get away from Dublin. How he lived for a time is hard to tell. He had self-respect enough to be ashamed of his heedlessness, and kept his friends ignorant of his condition until driven by distress and want. He had worn out the patience of his mother, whose early hope in him had so often been disappointed by his heedlessness. The patience of his brother Henry was gone; they quarreled, and for a time their affec-

tionate intercourse ceased. Some years after, in the opening lines of "The Traveler," he pays a deserved tribute to the memory of this most excellent man.

Finally his uncle, Dean Goldsmith, professing to see signs of genius in his nephew, advised that he study medicine, since he had failed in the other professions.

In the autumn of 1752—he was now twenty-four years of age—he went up to Edinburgh, leaving his home and the scenes of his boyhood and early manhood never to see them again, though he seems to have had a ceaseless longing. He writes—

> "I still had hopes, my long vexations past,
> Here to return—and die at home at last."

He says that he lived and studied at Edinburgh for a year and a half. Tiring of Scotland, he went thence to Leyden, ostensibly to continue the study of medicine, but possibly to gratify his curiosity, and to satisfy his vagabond nature. However it appears that during his stay of a year and a half in that city he attended lectures on chemistry and anatomy by two distinguished professors. It is quite likely, too, that he was a close observer of men and manners, and that here he first became aware of his literary talent, and that his studies tended more to literature than to science.

The thirty-three pounds with which he had set out on his travels could not last him very long, and he was often hard pushed to meet his expenses.

Sometimes following his inclination to take chances, he had resort to the gaming table, with varying success, generally ill. He was cured at least for a time of his gambling propensity, by losing all he had. His good friend Mr. Ellis came to his relief upon condition that he would leave Holland. His great and still unsatisfied curiosity to see other countries, to study men, manners and conditions of strange people, caused him to make the promise the more readily. But before he could get away from Holland he had foolishly spent nearly all of his money and was again

left almost penniless. He could not turn back, nor could he ask his friend for further aid, so he set out on foot in February, 1755, "with a single guinea, one spare shirt and his flute," trusting to chance for good luck, "taking no thought for the morrow," and finding the "evil of the day sufficient thereof."

It would be extremely interesting, and a valuable contribution to the history of letters, and to literature in general, if we had from his own pen a detailed description of his experiences during the years 1755–56. In his poem, "The Traveler," he tells us something of what he felt, and what he saw, but he has given us no full or accurate account, though we have hints in several of his productions, and in the adventures of the "Philosophical Vagabond" we learn only and not very definitely, of the shifts made to accommodate himself to, doubtless, many privations. He says, "I had some knowledge of music, with a tolerable voice. I now turned what was once my amusement into a present means of subsistence."

At Paris he heard lectures on Chemistry by Rouelle, who was at that time very popular, and beauty, as well as wit and learning, listened to him. Probably Goldsmith was as much interested in *beauty* as in the scientific talk of the lecturer. He made the acquaintance of Voltaire, of whom he writes appreciatingly, Fontenelle, Diderot and others of the intellectual aristocracy. Contact with such minds was probably of more value to him in the end than the quasi study of chemistry or other science. From Paris he rambled through parts of Germany; into Switzerland, and the north part of Italy. How long he stayed in Italy is uncertain, but it is said that he brought from Padua his degree of M. D., concerning which, however, there has always been some question.

The experiences, and impressions produced by them, of his continental vagabondage we find recorded and enlarged upon in his poem "The Traveler."

By various expedients he worked his way back from the continent, arriving in London early in 1756. He had spent nearly

two years roving on the continent aimless of purpose perhaps, except the "pursuing of novelty," and resulting in the "losing of content." But the loss was personal; the world has been greatly a gainer, and the *tribulum* of trial and deprivation had served to separate in some measure at least, the chaff from the grain. He had come to a realizing sense that he must look upon life as real and earnest! He had alienated his friends at home, and must make others in London, and they demanded that he show himself worthy of their help and esteem. But what could a penniless stranger do alone in London? This city was as foreign to him as any he had visited. He had no recommendations, no friends, and, as he says, had lost all his impudence. When he asked for employment, "his threadbare coat, his uncouth figure," and—more than all else perhaps—"his Hibernian accent caused him to meet with repeated refusals." We cannot know to what shifts the poor houseless wanderer was put to find food and shelter.

It seems that his first venture was as an usher in a school conducted by a Dr. Milner, in which he remained but a short time. Next we find him at work in a chemist's shop. While here he learned that his old friend and fellow student at Edinburgh, Dr. Sleigh, was in town. He hunted him up eager to meet a friendly face. It was through his advice and kindly assistance that Goldsmith set up to practice medicine, and he opened an office in Southwark. But practice among the poor is generally ill paid, and it may be taken for granted that he was often pushed by want, though he assumed an air of prosperity.

Dr. Sleigh again came to his assistance and introduced him to some booksellers who gave him occasional work at poor pay. He was also introduced to a firm of publishers employed by Mr. Samuel Richardson, author of "Pamela," and got him the place of "proof reader and corrector of the press." He was thus brought into close contact with literature and with literary men of the time. It is not improbable that such association determined to some extent his future.

While employed in the school of Dr. Milner he had made a favorable impression upon one Mr. Griffiths, publisher of the "Monthly Review," to which Dr. Milner was an occasional contributor. An interview with him proving satisfactory to both, Goldsmith became a contributor to that magazine, and took up his residence at the house of the publisher. His work on the "Review" was more or less mechanical and poorly remunerative, but it strengthened the influence, as yet hardly felt, of his experience in the employ of Richardson. He here "discovered the happy faculty of literary expression that led to the composition of his masterpieces."

With the Griffiths his life was nothing more than one of literary vassalage. At the end of five months of distasteful labor he and they parted company. His work had attracted attention, and although he had passed beyond the apprenticeship of hack work, and though he was now thirty years of age he had produced nothing of great or permanent literary value.

He had however become known to the publishers and found occasional employment. This sort of job work was but a degree, if any, better than mere hack work, but it helped to keep his purse from being utterly empty. He *lodged* in Fleet Street, but *hailed* from the Temple Exchange Coffee House near Temple Bar. The Coffee House was in those days, as it had been in years past, the familiar resort of men of letters, and at the Temple Exchange he met with men of some literary reputation, and enlarged his acquaintance among them.

About this time he with the aid of Dr. Milner tried to secure a medical appointment to India: but he failed either because of the want of ready means, or because he was not found qualified for the place. But his effort to be appointed to this place set him to work on his "Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe," the first literary production of importance that came from his pen. On the 2d of April, 1759, this was published by the Dodsleys, and his career as an author may be said to have begun. The book was published anonymously, but all

Grub Street knew that Goldsmith was the author, and he did not deny its authorship. "Its grace and ease of style, a gentle and sometimes pathetic thoughtfulness, and, above all, when he speaks in the first person, a delightful vein of humorous disclosure" were bringing him recognition. Bishop Percy sought him out in his garret; Smollett wanted his contributions for the "British Magazine"; Burke expressed his pleasure, and better than all the learned Dr. Samuel Johnson hunted up this obscure author, and the most interesting personal and literary friendship began.

This was a time of periodical literature. To a few of the most worthy and successful, "The Bee," "The Busybody," and the "Lady's Magazine," Goldsmith was a contributor. "His essays, though characterized by his delightful style, his pure benevolent morality, and his mellow, unobtrusive humor, did not produce equal effect at first with more garish writings of infinitely less value; but they had that rare and enduring merit which rises in estimation with every perusal. They gradually stole upon the heart of the public, were copied into numerous contemporary publications, and now they are garnered up among the choice productions of British literature."

His growing reputation was beginning to bring him increased returns for his literary work, so that he was now, about the middle of the year 1760, in easier and more comfortable circumstances.

During the year 1761 Goldsmith became intimately acquainted with Dr. Samuel Johnson. They had known of each other for some time. There was much in the early life of each of them to create between them a strong bond of sympathy, though they were of utterly opposite natures. The acquaintance formed at a supper given by Goldsmith at his new lodgings in Wine Office Court ripened into a firm and intimate friendship that lasted as long as they both lived.

A little later Hogarth, the artist, became a frequent visitor at his house. But Goldsmith found a more congenial com-

panion and friend in that other artist, Mr., afterward Sir, Joshua Reynolds, who charmed as well by his manners as his art. He seemed to understand and appreciate the genius of the poet, and then was begun between them a sincere and lasting friendship. At the hospitable board of the artist the poet met men of a higher and wider intellectual range than that to which he had been used. This frequent coming together of men of wit, talent and learning, produced the Literary Club, composed of nine members, the best known of whom are Johnson, Burke, Reynolds and Goldsmith. Of these Johnson had the greatest influence and control over Goldsmith, and was his "guide, philosopher and friend."

Up to this time Goldsmith had produced nothing worthy of note in verse. He did not believe in his own powers and distrusted the public. "The Traveler" had remained unfinished since he had sent the sketch of it many years ago from Switzerland to his brother Henry in Ireland. After some revision, and with a good deal of hesitancy he submitted it to Dr. Johnson who urged him to finish it for publication. It was published by Newbery in 1764, and was dedicated to his brother Henry. It soon went through the fourth edition and before the end of the year he was declared the best poet of his time, and his intellectual standing was established. Johnson's approval was warm and generous, and he pronounced it the best poem that had appeared since Pope's time.

With his rising reputation as an author, he thought he ought to advance his style of living, and he moved from Wine Office Court to lodgings in the Temple. They were not very sumptuous, but better than any he had had, and moreover they were in classic surroundings made famous by the "Spectator" and other essayists. Here the gay wits and men of letters of a former generation had lived and worked, and its atmosphere breathed inspiration.

The rise in his reputation, following the publication of "The Traveler" influenced him to collect and publish in 1765 a

volume of his miscellaneous essays and tales for which he received the not very munificent sum of twenty guineas. This seems to have been a "potboiler" for he was as usual hard pushed for money, owing to spendthrift habits and his heedless generosity. This pecuniary embarrassment drove him again to hack writing, and by the advice of some friends who supposed that his wide popularity and extended acquaintance would commend him, he attempted to secure a more regular and reliable support by the practice of his profession. But he soon grew tired of the whims and exactions of his patients; the sick room was not as congenial to him as his tavern haunts and convivial associates. He gave it up for the last time and forever.

Something more than a year after the publication of "The Traveler," in March, 1766, "The Vicar of Wakefield" was published. It had been in the hands of the purchaser, Mr. John Newbery, to whom it had been sold two years before by Dr. Johnson for sixty guineas, in order to relieve Goldsmith from pressing want, and the importunities of creditors. Either through ignorance of its value, or because he feared its publication would interfere with the sale of "The Traveler," he kept it back until he had reaped all possible advantage from the sale of the poem. Johnson himself seems not to have had the highest opinion of the novel. So perfect is it a picture of the scenes and manners of rustic home life, though peculiarly British, that it has been translated into almost all languages of the civilized world, and it charms to-day as much as when it was first published. It is a lasting monument to the genius of Goldsmith that he did in so masterly a manner, and with such truthfulness, create images of home life, pictures of domestic happiness with which his way of life made him utterly unacquainted.

Although there were three editions of the "Vicar" put out they brought the author no additional recompense, as the copyright had been sold to the Newberys, yet his fame was growing and he was one of the literary lions of the day. But his extrava-

gance was sinking him deeper and deeper into debt. He was again compelled to resort to hack writing, and fortunately he was in demand by booksellers.

Such work, however, was now distasteful to him, and he began to consider whether there were some line of work more in keeping with genius and reputation. We have seen that he was fond of the theater. Though he did admire the sentimental comedy which was then so much in vogue, the "Clandestine Marriage" better pleased him as it portrayed real life and presented characters true to nature and in such portrayal he knew himself to excel. The result was that in 1766 he began the building of a comedy to be called "The Good-natured Man." After many delays, much to the pecuniary disadvantage of Goldsmith, the play was put on at Covent Garden in January, 1768. It netted the author five hundred pounds.

Of course so much money was too heavy a load for him to carry very long. Its possession gave him abundant opportunity for gratifying his extravagant tastes; he again found himself distressed with debts, some of which remained unpaid at the time of his death. Book building was resumed and he undertook for a publisher named Davies to compile a "History of Rome." In October, at his quarters in the Temple he began to piece together this work which was brought out in May, 1769, and was very well received. Its success prompted Davies to make him an offer of five hundred pounds for a compilation to be called a "History of England" in four volumes. He undertook the work and laid aside for a time his work on the "History of Animated Nature" which he had contracted for with Griffiths. This was to consist of "eight volumes of four hundred or more pages each." It was never completed.

In the meanwhile during intervals of rest from his exacting work of book building he was putting the finishing touches to his "Deserted Village," and it appeared in May, 1770. Its success was instantaneous. The enormous demand caused it to go through five editions within three months. As a poem it has

ever been in the highest degree a favorite. It is not a poem to be "committed to memory" but one to be "learned by heart."

In August, 1771, appeared his four volume edition of the "History of England." It is an elegant and agreeable epitome, and like his other historical works is of value only because it helps to make history interesting reading. His "History of Greece" is of less value than either "Rome" or "England."

Since the publication of "The Deserted Village" we do not find that anything worthy of his genius had come from his pen. Besides his job work, a few amusing trifles in poetic form are named; among them "The Haunch of Venison," and the famous "Elegy on Madam Blaize."

But such trifles could not pay his extravagant expenses. He had borrowed from, and speculated in the future; spent the money he had not earned, some of which he never earned. His comedy, "She Stoops to Conquer" had been some time finished and nearly two years had passed and yet he had not been able to get it presented. It was not until March, 1773, that Manager Colman agreed to put it on the stage at Covent Garden. All of Goldsmith's friends rallied to give it a good send-off, and it met with triumphant success, and has a place upon the stage to-day. The author ought to have been, no doubt was, highly elated, but there were hanging over him debts that he knew he could not pay. His health was impaired, and his heart was sick from anxiety. His usual gayety and good humor were gone, and his behavior was full of caprices.

It is, however, a mistake to say that Goldsmith was badly treated by the world, though he had some virulent enemies, petty souls whose enmity did not weigh a "pin's fee" against the firm and lasting friendship of most worthy men. Whatever "griefs God had given him" were given for his own asking, and his misfortunes and miseries were largely, if not altogether, of his own making. After the publication of "The Traveler" he would have been a prosperous man if he had been a wiser one. His work was in demand at remunerative prices, and his income during

the last seven years of his life was adequate to what might be considered a luxurious style of living, but not to a life of spendthrift extravagance. He was attacked by a nervous fever which his own prescriptions aggravated. He died on the third of April, 1774, in the forty-sixth year of his age, and was buried in the Temple Churchyard. The spot of his interment is now forgotten. Some friends and admirers, shortly after his death, raised funds for a monument to his memory. It consists simply of a high relief medallion portrait of the poet, with a Latin epitaph composed by Johnson, and is placed in the "Poets Corner" of Westminster Abbey.

A short time after his death the poem called "Retaliation" was published. It was left unfinished, but, fragment as it is, has an enduring place in our literature.

Speaking of the poet after his death, Johnson said: "Goldsmith whatever he did, did it better than any other man could do." We may not subscribe wholly to this, but there is no one who is acquainted with his life and writings but will agree with Washington Irving. "There are few writers for whom the reader feels such personal kindness as for Oliver Goldsmith, for few have so eminently possessed the magic gift of identifying themselves with their writings. . . . The artless benevolence that beams through his works; the whimsical yet amiable views of human life and human nature; the unforced humor, blending so happily with good feeling and good sense; . . . even the very nature of his mellow, and flowing, and softly tinted style—all seem to bespeak his moral as well as his intellectual qualities, and makes us love the man at the same time that we admire the author. While the productions of writers of loftier pretension and more sounding names are suffered to molder on our shelves, those of Goldsmith are cherished and laid in our bosoms."

There may have been much in him to condemn, but there was much more to be pitied and not a little to be loved and admired.

THE DESERTED VILLAGE.

SWEET AUBURN![1] loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheered the laboring swain,[2]
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's lingering blooms delayed:
Dear lovely bowers[3] of innocence and ease,
Seats[4] of my youth, when every sport could please,
How often have I loitered o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endeared each scene!
How often have I paused on every charm,
The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm,
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent[5] church that topped the neighboring hill,
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whispering lovers made!
How often have I blessed the coming day,
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,
And all the village train,[6] from labor free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree;
While many a pastime circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old surveyed,
And many a gambol frolicked o'er the ground,
And sleights of art and feats of strength went round:

[1] For the identity of the village, see the Introduction, p. 3.
[2] A man who lives in the country.
[3] Cottages, or abodes.
[4] Dwelling places.
[5] Neat.
[6] Company of people.

And still, as each repeated pleasure tired,
Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired;
The dancing pair that simply sought renown,
By holding out, to tire each other down;
The swain mistrustless of his smutted face,[1]
While secret laughter tittered round the place;
The bashful virgin's sidelong looks of love,
The matron's glance that would those looks reprove.
These were thy charms, sweet village! sports like these,
With sweet succession, taught even toil to please;
These round thy bowers their cheerful influence shed;
These were thy charms—but all these charms are fled.
Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,[2]
Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;
Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's [3] hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all thy green:
One only master grasps the whole domain,
And half a tillage [4] stints thy smiling plain.
No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,
But, choked with sedges, works its weedy way;
Along thy glades, a solitary guest,
The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest;
Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies,
And tires their echoes with unvaried cries.
Sunk are thy bowers in shapeless ruin all,
And the long grass o'ertops the moldering wall;
And, trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand,
Far, far away, thy children leave the land.
Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay: [5]

[1] An allusion, probably, to some practical joke.

[2] Here used in the sense of "plain." See the opening line.

[3] Some landowner who has removed the people to make room for his estate. Also called "the spoiler" a few lines below.

[4] The crops are only half as large as formerly.

[5] Become few.

Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade—
A breath [1] can make them, as a breath has made:
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed, can never be supplied.

A time there was, ere England's griefs [2] began,
When every rood of ground maintained its man:
For him light labor spread her wholesome store,
Just gave what life required, but gave no more:
His best companions, innocence and health,
And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.

But times are altered; trade's unfeeling train
Usurp the land, and dispossess the swain:
Along the lawn, where scattered hamlets rose,
Unwieldy wealth and cumbrous pomp repose;
And every want to opulence allied,
And every pang that folly pays to pride.
Those gentle hours that plenty bade [3] to bloom,
Those calm desires that asked but little room,
Those healthful sports that graced the peaceful scene,
Lived in each look, and brightened all the green;
These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,
And rural mirth and manners are no more.

Sweet Auburn! parent of the blissful hour,
Thy glades forlorn confess the tyrant's power.
Here, as I take my solitary rounds
Amidst thy tangling walks and ruined grounds,
And, many a year elapsed, return to view
Where once the cottage stood, the hawthorn grew,

[1] Referring to the power of monarchs to confer titles of nobility.

"Princes and lords are but the breath of kings."—Burns.

[2] This phrase seems to support the view that "Auburn" was an English village. However, Goldsmith was dealing with conditions which he supposed to be common to England and Ireland.

[3] What is the subject of "bade"?

Remembrance wakes with all her busy train,[1]
Swells at my breast, and turns the past to pain.
In all my wand'rings [2] round this world of care,
In all my griefs—and God has given my share—
I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown,
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;
To husband out life's taper at the close,
And keep the flame from wasting by repose.
I still had hopes, for pride attends us still,
Amidst the swains to show my book-learned skill,
Around my fire an evening group to draw,
And tell of all I felt, and all I saw;
And, as a hare, whom hounds and horns pursue,
Pants to the place from whence at first he flew,
I still had hopes, my long vexations past,
Here to return—and die at home at last.[3]
O blest retirement, friend to life's decline,
Retreats from care, that never must be mine,
How happy he who crowns, in shades like these,
A youth of labor with an age of ease;
Who quits a world where strong temptations try,
And, since 'tis hard to combat, learns to fly!
For him no wretches, born to work and weep,
Explore the mine, or tempt the dangerous deep;
Nor surly porter stands, in guilty state,
To spurn imploring famine [4] from the gate:
But on he moves to meet his latter end,
Angels around befriending virtue's friend;

[1] Of memories. Compare the phrase, "train of thought."

[2] Doubtless an allusion to the poet's own experience. See the Introduction, pp. 8–9.

[3] This passage indicates that Goldsmith was thinking of "Auburn" as his boyhood home in Ireland.

[4] The hungry beggar. By metonymy, the poet names the abstract for the concrete.

Sinks to the grave with unperceived decay,
While resignation gently slopes the way;
And, all his prospects brightening to the last,
His heaven commences, ere the world be past!
Sweet was the sound, when oft at evening's [1] close
Up yonder hill the village murmur rose;
There, as I passed with careless steps and slow,
The mingling notes came softened from below:
The swain responsive as the milkmaid sung,
The sober herd that lowed to meet their young;
The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool,
The playful children just let loose from school;
The watchdog's voice that bayed the whispering wind,
And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind; [2] —
These all in sweet confusion sought the shade,
And filled each pause the nightingale had made;
But now the sounds of population fail,
No cheerful murmurs fluctuate in the gale,[3]
No busy steps the grass-grown footway tread,
For all the bloomy flush of life is fled.
All but yon widowed, solitary thing,
That feebly bends beside the plashy spring:
She, wretched matron—forced in age, for bread,[4]
To strip the brook with mantling cresses spread,
To pick her wintry fagot from the thorn,
To seek her nightly shed, and weep till morn—
She only left of all the harmless train,
The sad historian of the pensive plain!
Near yonder copse, where once the garden smiled,
And still where many a garden flower grows wild,

[1] Goldsmith here uses "evening" in the sense of "afternoon," a sense in which it is used in our Southern states.

[2] Indicated a mind not necessarily lacking in intelligence, but free from care, unemployed.

[3] A breeze, not a strong wind.

[4] A general term for food.

There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
The village preacher's [1] modest mansion [2] rose.
A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing [3] rich with forty pounds a year;
Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change his place; [4]
Unpracticed he to fawn, or seek for power,
By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour;
Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,
More skilled to raise the wretched than to rise.
His house was known to all the vagrant train,
He chid their wanderings, but relieved their pain:
The long-remembered beggar was his guest,
Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;
The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claimed kindred there, and had his claims allowed;
The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,
Sat by his fire, and talked the night away,
Wept o'er his wounds, or, tales of sorrow done,
Shouldered his crutch and showed how fields were won.
Pleased with his guests, the good man learned to glow,
And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began.[5]
Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And e'en his failings leaned to virtue's side; [6]
But in his duty, prompt at every call,

[1] In the description of the village preacher, the poet is supposed to have had in mind his father, or his brother Henry, or both.

[2] Dwelling. The word as used by Goldsmith does not include its modern suggestion of large size or magnificence.

[3] Adverb, equivalent to "surpassingly."

[4] Rank, or position, rather than location.

[5] His giving sprang from heartfelt sympathy rather than from a sense of duty.

[6] He was perhaps more generous toward the unfortunate than was wise.

He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all;
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.

Beside the bed where parting life was laid,
And sorrow, guilt, and pain, by turns dismayed,
The reverend champion [1] stood. At his control
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul;
Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,
And his last faltering accents whispered praise.

At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorned the venerable place;
Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,
And fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray.
The service past, around the pious man,
With steady zeal, each honest rustic ran;
E'en children followed, with endearing wile,
And plucked his gown, to share the good man's smile.
His ready smile a parent's warmth expressed;
Their welfare pleased him, and their cares distressed;
To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven.
As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way,
With blossom'd furze unprofitably gay—
There, in his noisy mansion, skilled to rule,
The village master [2] taught his little school.

[1] The preacher is called a "champion" because he fights spiritually for the dying man against sorrow, guilt, despair, and anguish.

[2] The passage describing the village schoolmaster is thought to be a picture of Goldsmith's teacher in Lissoy,—Thomas, or "Paddy," Byrne.

A man severe he was, and stern to view,
I knew him well, and every truant knew:
Well had the boding [1] tremblers learned to trace
The day's disasters in his morning face;
Full well they laughed with counterfeited glee
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;
Full well the busy whisper, circling round,
Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned.
Yet he was kind, or, if severe in aught,
The love he bore to learning was in fault.
The village all declared how much he knew:
'Twas certain he could write, and cipher too;
Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage,[2]
And e'en the story ran that he could gauge: [3]
In arguing, too, the parson owned his skill,
For e'en though vanquished, he could argue still;
While words of learnèd length and thund'ring sound
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around;
And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,
That one small head could carry all he knew.
But past is all his fame. The very spot,
Where many a time he triumphed, is forgot.
Near yonder thorn that lifts its head on high,
Where once the signpost caught the passing eye,
Low lies that house where nut-brown drafts inspired,
Where gray-beard mirth [4] and smiling toil [4] retired,
Where village statesmen talked with looks profound,
And news much older than their ale went round.

[1] Foreboding, or fearing beforehand.

[2] A somewhat obscure phrase. "Terms" may mean the periods during which colleges or courts of law are in session; the word is also applied in England and Ireland to the four days in each year, called quarter-days, when rents are settled. "Tides" may mean either the periods of high and low water, or "times and seasons," especially seasons or days in the church year.

[3] To find out the capacity of vessels containing liquids.

[4] Mirthful old men. Smiling laborers. See note 4, p. 20.

Imagination fondly stoops to trace
The parlor [1] splendors of that festive place:
The whitewashed wall, the nicely sanded floor,
The varnished clock that clicked behind the door;
The chest contrived a double debt to pay,
A bed by night, a chest of drawers by day;
The pictures placed for ornament and use,[2]
The twelve good rules,[3] the royal game of goose; [4]
The hearth, except when winter chilled the day,
With aspen boughs, and flowers and fennel gay;
While broken teacups, wisely kept for show,
Ranged o'er the chimney, glistened in a row.
Vain transitory splendors! could not all
Reprieve the tottering mansion from its fall?
Obscure it sinks, nor shall it more impart
An hour's importance to the poor man's heart;
Thither no more the peasant shall repair
To sweet oblivion of his daily care;
No more the farmer's news, the barber's tale,
No more the woodman's ballad shall prevail;
No more the smith his dusky brow shall clear,
Relax his ponderous strength and lean to hear;
The host himself no longer shall be found
Careful to see the mantling bliss [5] go round;
Nor the coy maid, half willing to be pressed,
Shall kiss the cup [6] to pass it to the rest.

[1] Here used with the force of an adjective.

[2] The "use" was, perhaps, to conceal defects in the walls.

[3] Twelve maxims, or rules of conduct, at that time frequently hung up in public houses. According to Goldsmith they were drawn up by Charles I.

[4] "A game played with counters on a board divided into compartments, in some of which a goose was depicted."

[5] Foaming ale. "Bliss" is here named instead of the drink which produces it. Another example of metonymy—the effect named for the cause.

[6] A medieval custom.

Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
These simple blessings of the lowly train,
To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
One native charm, than all the gloss of art;
Spontaneous joys, where Nature has its play,
The soul adopts, and owns their first-born sway:
Lightly they frolic o'er the vacant mind,[1]
Unenvied, unmolested, unconfined.
But the long pomp,[2] the midnight masquerade,
With all the freaks of wanton wealth arrayed,—
In these, ere triflers half their wish obtain,
The toiling pleasure sickens into pain;
And, e'en while fashion's brightest arts decoy,
The heart distrusting asks if this be joy.
Ye friends to truth, ye statesmen who survey
The rich man's joys increase, the poor's decay,
'Tis yours to judge how wide the limits stand [3]
Between a splendid and a happy land.
Proud swells the tide with loads of freighted ore,[4]
And shouting Folly hails them from her shore;
Hoards e'en beyond the miser's wish abound,
And rich men flock from all the world around.
Yet count our gains. This wealth is but a name
That leaves our useful products still the same.
Not so the loss. The man of wealth and pride
Takes up a space that many poor supplied;
Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,
Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds;
The robe that wraps his limbs in silken sloth [5]
Has robbed the neighboring fields of half their growth;

[1] See note 2, p. 21.
[2] Procession.
[3] How wide the separation is. Wide = far apart.
[4] Gold and silver loaded (freighted) on ships.
[5] Either the silk robe has cost half as much as the produce of the neigh-

His seat, where solitary sports [1] are seen,
Indignant spurns the cottage from the green;
Around the world each needful product flies,
For all the luxuries the world supplies; [2]
While thus the land, adorned for pleasure, all
In barren splendor feebly waits the fall.
As some fair female, unadorned and plain,[3]
Secure to please while youth confirms her reign,
Slights every borrowed charm that dress supplies,
Nor shares with art the triumph of her eyes;
But when those charms are past, for charms are frail,
When time advances, and when lovers fail,
She then shines forth, solicitous to bless,[4]
In all the glaring impotence of dress;
Thus fares the land, by luxury betrayed:
In Nature's simplest charms at first arrayed,
But verging to decline, its splendors rise,
Its vistas strike, its palaces surprise:
While, scourged by famine, from the smiling land
The mournful peasant leads his humble band; [5]
And while he sinks, without one arm to save,
The country blooms—a garden and a grave.
Where then, ah! where shall poverty reside,
To scape the pressure of contiguous pride?

boring fields is worth; or, on account of the luxury of the rich man, suggested by the silk robe, the fields are not cultivated so intensively as when they were tilled by numerous holders of small farms. See note 4, p. 18.

[1] The "solitary sports" of the rich man are in contrast with the social sports of the country people, described on p. 17.

[2] The needful products of the home country are sent abroad to pay for luxuries.

[3] Artless, or natural. The following lines show that "plain" cannot here mean "lacking in beauty."

[4] To please some lover.

[5] Family.

If to some common's fenceless limits strayed
He drives his flock to pick the scanty blade,
Those fenceless fields the sons of wealth divide,
And e'en the bare-worn common is denied.
If to the city sped—what waits him there?
To see profusion that he must not share;
To see ten thousand baneful arts combined
To pamper luxury and thin mankind;
To see those joys the sons of pleasure know,
Extorted from his fellow-creature's woe.
Here, while the courtier glitters in brocade,
There, the pale artist plies the sickly trade; [1]
Here, while the proud their long-drawn pomps display,
There, the black gibbet glooms beside the way.
The dome [2] where pleasure holds her midnight reign,
Here, richly decked, admits the gorgeous train;
Tumultuous grandeur crowds the blazing square,[3]
The rattling chariots [4] clash, the torches glare.
Sure scenes like these no troubles e'er annoy;
Sure these denote one universal joy!
Are these thy serious thoughts?—Ah! turn thine eyes
Where the poor houseless shivering female lies.
She once, perhaps, in village plenty blessed,
Has wept at tales of innocence distressed;
Her modest looks the cottage might adorn,
Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn;
Now lost to all: her friends, her virtue fled,
Near her betrayer's door she lays her head—
And, pinched with cold, and shrinking from the shower,
With heavy heart deplores that luckless hour,

[1] The pale artisan, or workman, is busy at his unhealthful occupation. The poet did not distinguish, as we do, between "artist" and "artisan."

[2] Here used to mean a building, not a cupola.

[3] Blazing with torches, which were carried to supply light in the street.

[4] Carriages.

When idly [1] first, ambitious of the town,
She left her wheel [2] and robes of country brown.
Do thine, sweet Auburn! thine the loveliest train,
Do thy fair tribes participate her pain?
E'en now, perhaps, by cold and hunger led,
At proud men's doors they ask a little bread!
Ah, no! To distant climes, a dreary scene,
Where half the convex world intrudes between,
Through torrid tracts with fainting steps they go,
Where wild Altama [3] murmurs to their woe.
Far different there from all that charmed before,
The various terrors of that horrid shore;
Those blazing suns that dart a downward ray,
And fiercely shed intolerable day;
Those matted woods where birds forget to sing;
But silent bats in drowsy clusters cling;
Those poisonous fields with rank luxuriance crowned,
Where the dark scorpion gathers death around;
Where at each step the stranger fears to wake
The rattling terrors of the vengeful snake;
Where crouching tigers [4] wait their hapless prey,
And savage men more murderous still than they;
While oft in whirls the mad tornado flies,
Mingling the ravaged landscape with the skies.
Far different these from every former scene,
The cooling brook, the grassy-vested green,
The breezy covert of the warbling grove,
That only sheltered thefts of harmless love.
Good Heaven! what sorrows gloomed that parting day,
That called them from their native walks away;

[1] Foolishly, a meaning now obsolete.
[2] Spinning wheel.
[3] The Altamaha River, in Georgia.
[4] An inaccuracy, since the tiger is not found in America. Perhaps the poet meant the puma or the jaguar.

When the poor exiles, every pleasure past,
Hung round the bowers, and fondly looked their last—
And took a long farewell, and wished in vain
For seats like these beyond the western main—
And, shuddering still to face the distant deep,
Returned and wept, and still returned to weep.
The good old sire the first prepared to go
To new-found worlds, and wept for others' woe;
But, for himself, in conscious virtue brave,
He only wished for worlds beyond the grave.
His lovely daughter, lovelier in her tears,
The fond companion of his helpless years,
Silent went next, neglectful of her charms,
And left a lover's for a father's arms.
With louder plaints the mother spoke her woes,
And blessed the cot where every pleasure rose,
And kissed her thoughtless babes with many a tear,
And clasped them close, in sorrow doubly dear;
Whilst her fond husband strove to lend relief
In all the silent manliness of grief.
O luxury! thou curst by Heaven's decree,
How ill exchanged are things like these for thee!
How do thy potions, with insidious joy,
Diffuse their pleasures only to destroy!
Kingdoms, by thee to sickly greatness grown,
Boast of a florid [1] vigor not their own:
At every draft more large and large they grow,
A bloated mass of rank unwieldy woe; [2]
Till, sapped their strength, and every part unsound,
Down, down they sink, and spread a ruin round.

[1] "Florid" may mean either blooming with flowers, or blooming with health, hence ruddy.

[2] The kingdoms are represented as taking luxury's potions, or drinks, at every draft of which they grow greater outwardly, but inwardly become diseased.

Even now the devastation is begun,
And half the business of destruction done;
Even now, methinks, as pondering here I stand,
I see the rural virtues leave the land.
Down where yon anchoring vessel spreads the sail
That idly waiting flaps with every gale,
Downward they [1] move, a melancholy band,
Pass from the shore,[2] and darken all the strand.[2]
Contented toil, and hospitable care,
And kind connubial tenderness are there,
And piety with wishes placed above,[3]
And steady loyalty, and faithful love.
And thou, sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid,
Still first to fly where sensual joys invade;
Unfit, in these degenerate times of shame,
To catch the heart, or strike for honest fame:
Dear charming nymph,[4] neglected and decried,
My shame in crowds, my solitary pride;
Thou source of all my bliss, and all my woe,
Thou found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so; [5]
Thou guide, by which the nobler arts excel,
Thou nurse of every virtue, fare thee well!
Farewell! and oh! where'er thy voice be tried,
On Torno's [6] cliffs, or Pambamarca's [6] side,
Whether where equinoctial fervors glow,
Or winter wraps the polar world in snow,

[1] The "rural virtues," personified, which are named in the following lines.

[2] Note the distinction between "shore" and "strand." The "strand" here must mean the strip of beach between the ocean and the main "shore."

[3] With desires turned toward heaven.

[4] A goddess, here apparently equivalent to "muse."

[5] Goldsmith's poverty was due to his improvident habits, not to his being a poet.

[6] There is a Tornea (or Torneo) river between Sweden and Russia; also a Lake Tornea in northern Sweden. Pambamarca is one of the Andes mountains, near the equator. Thus "Pambamarca's side" suggests the "equinoc-

Still let thy voice, prevailing over time,
Redress the rigors of the inclement clime; [1]
Aid slighted truth with thy persuasive strain;
Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain;
Teach him that states of native strength possessed,[2]
Though very poor, may still be very blest;
That trade's proud empire hastes to swift decay,
As ocean sweeps the labored mole away;
While self-dependent power can time defy,
As rocks resist the billows and the sky.[3]

tial fervors" of the following line, while "Torno's cliffs" are where "winter wraps the polar world in snow."

[1] Makes up for the severity of the climate.

[2] States, or countries, possessed of their native strength; *i. e.*, depending on their own resources, not on foreign trade.

[3] The last four lines were written by Dr. Samuel Johnson.



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